1.20.11.

Library of the Theological Seminary

PRINCETON, N. J.

From the Library of
Dr. James McCosh.

Division SCC

Section 2812

Sermons

by

John Guyse.

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
* JAN 20 1911
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

SERMON I.

The Evil of Self-Seeking, &c.

By John Guyse

Preached at a Meeting of MINISTERS at *Royston* in *Hertfordshire*, *July* 17, 1718.

Note, *This Sermon was transcribed at the request of a friend only for the use of a private family, but was printed without the consent or knowledge of the Author.*

PHILIP. II. 21.

For all seek their own, not the things which are JESUS CHRIST's.

THIS Epistle was written by the Apostle *Paul*, when he was in bonds at *Rome*, for the sake of the Gospel; and 'twas sent to the *Philippians* by *Epaphroditus*, as the postscript avers.

Indeed, none of the postscripts to the Epistles are any part of holy scripture; they were not written by the inspired penmen, but added by some later hand, and in some of them there are manifest mistakes. But what is said in this postscript may be allowed to be true, because it may be gathered from the Epistle itself, particularly from chap. i. 13, and following verses, compared with chap. ii. 25, to the end.

The Apoſtle wrote this Epiſtle, moſt probably, at the time of his firſt impriſonment at *Rome*; for he ſpeaks with confidence, and it may be with a prophetic ſpirit, that he ſhould continue in the body for the ſervice of CHRIST, and that at *Philippi*, chap. i. 25, 26. Whereas in his ſecond impriſonment, he was under as ſtrong apprehenſions of his ſuffering martyrdom for CHRIST, and that *the time of his departure was then at hand* (*a*).

The chief deſign of this Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, was to encourage them to conſtancy and perſeverance in the faith and holineſs of the Goſpel, from which they were in danger of being perverted by falſe judaizing teachers, and of being diſcouraged by the Apoſtle's bonds. That therefore he might do his utmoſt for their eſtabliſhment, he ſent them this Epiſtle, and therein, among other things, gave them hopes of his own coming in due ſeaſon to them; told them he had ſent *Epaphroditus* to their Aſſiſtance for the preſent, and promiſed (by the Will of GOD) to ſend *Timothy* after him in a little time, chap. ii. 23, 24, 25.

He begins to ſpeak of ſending *Timothy* in the 19th verſe; and he gives them the reaſon why he pitched upon him, a reaſon as engaging and inſinuating as it is ſolid; *For*, ſays he, *I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your ſtate* (*b*). There was none with him ſo fit as *Timothy* to encourage and eſtabliſh them, for there was none but *Timothy* like the Apoſtle in his affectionate concern for them; or rather, there was none elſe with the Apoſtle like *Timothy*, whoſe heart was ſo ſincerely and genuinely, by a ſort of natural inſtinct, and parental affection, concerned about their affairs, as the phraſe he there uſes ſignifies. The proof of this lies in the words of our text, *For all ſeek their own, not the things which are* JESUS CHRIST's. The Apoſtle had probably put ſome others that were with him, upon going to *Philippi*

(*a*) 2 Tim. iv. 6. (*b*) ver. 20.

Philippi on this important errand, and found them backward to give themſelves that trouble: But as ſoon as he put it to *Timothy*, he chearfully fell in with it; or, it may be, he freely offered himſelf to that ſervice. Hereupon the Apoſtle might well give the juſt encomium of him which we have in the foregoing verſe, and ſet it off with the greater luſtre by the melancholy reflection he makes on the reſt in our text, that *all ſeek their own*, &c.

In theſe words (beſides the cauſal particle which connects them, in the manner you have heard, with the foregoing verſe) we have three parts,

I. Things of a *different ſort* ſpoken of; and they are *their own things*, and *the things of* JESUS CHRIST.

Firſt, Their *own things*; or *the things of themſelves*, as it might be rendered, according to the moſt ſtrict grammatical conſtruction, if that idiom ſuited our language. By *their own things* are meant the the things of this life, temporal, worldly things; all things that ſerve any preſent ſecular views or intereſts, that pertain to the body, or to the perſon as he ſtands in relation to this preſent world. Such things as theſe are called *their own*, becauſe they were theirs by providential diſpoſal and civil right: And ſome might call them *their own* by new covenant-tenure, ſo far as they uſed them to juſt and laudable purpoſes; and 'twas well if others did not make them *their own* in a very criminal ſenſe, uſing them only for themſelves, to gratify their own pride, and to indulge the fleſh in ſoftneſs, eaſe, and ſenſual pleaſure; and ſo every thing, in which they were merely ſelfiſh, might be called *their own*.

Secondly, The things of a different ſort from theſe, are *the things of* JESUS CHRIST; that is, ſpiritual things, the things of His kingdom, which are the things of His glory, of which He is the object; and the things of our ſalvation, of which He is the author. The laſt are comprehended in the firſt, and

the first I take to be chiefly intended in our text; for the Apostle had a particular regard herein to the concern of CHRIST's interest and glory, which, on divers accounts, needed furtherance in the Church at *Philippi*.

II. We have a sinful irregular disposition with regard to these things respectively: They *sought* one, and not the other; their *own*, and not CHRIST's. All seeking their *own things* would not have been in itself unlawful, if they had done it in a right manner, and to right ends; in due subordination to other things. But *they sought their own, and not the things of* JESUS CHRIST.

The word translated *seek*, takes in both the temper of the soul in its contrivances and desires, and the actings of the life in its endeavours: These were too much taken up with the things of this world, and too little with the things of CHRIST; the world retained them against CHRIST. Some *sought their own things*, and not at all *the things of* CHRIST; and others *sought their own things, and not* CHRIST's, in a comparative sense; they sought their *own* more than *His*; or at least, through their too great regard to their own things, they did not seek the things of JESUS CHRIST so vigorously as they ought to have done, nor as *Timothy* sought them.

III. We have the *subjects* of this sinful disposition, *they All sought their own*, &c. *All* here hath a special reference to the ministers that were then with the Apostle at *Rome*, though not exclusive of the private christians there; for carnality in ministers usually spreads its contagion through the people; and the Apostle in another place speaks of *all*, both ministers and private christians, as too deeply infected with it; when at his first imprisonment, or rather at his first summons in his second imprisonment, to answer for himself in *Nero*'s court, they were so fearful

ful of their ſecular intereſts, that none dared publicly to own him *(c)*.

They all univerſally fell ſhort of *Timothy*'s ſpirit, with reſpect to his diſintereſted zeal for CHRIST, and laborious purſuit of ſpiritual things: *There was none like-minded with him*; and a great many of them (as this particle *ALL* very often ſignifies in ſcripture) were wofully attached to the world, and under the impreſſions of ſenſitive things, to the ſad neglect of things of a ſpiritual ſort. This was the caſe of many, perhaps of the generality of them; an evil temper of heart this way was too common and prevailing among them; though there were ſome of a better ſpirit, who, encouraged by the Apoſtle's conſtancy, did afterwards in the face of all oppoſition and danger boldly aſſert the cauſe of CHRIST; as he had ſaid, chap. i. 14.

In further ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall only

Firſt, Conſider, *When* we may be ſaid to *ſeek our own things, and not the things of* JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly, Shew the great evil of doing ſo.

Thirdly, Apply, as time may allow.

Firſt, Conſider, *When* we may be ſaid to *ſeek our own things, and not the things of* JESUS CHRIST. I ſhall endeavour to exemplify this in ſeveral particulars.

1. We do this, when we ſeek our own things in oppoſition or diſſervice to the things of CHRIST.

When the *Jews* were apprehenſive (or at leaſt pretended to be ſo) that the advancement of CHRIST's kingdom might prove the deſtruction of their civil and church power; they immediately conſulted to ruin him and his kingdom at once *(d)*. The real ſpring, that gave life and ſtrength to the heatheniſh uproar at *Epheſus* againſt the Apoſtle and his companions for preaching CHRIST, was, that

(c) 2 Tim. iv. 16. *(d)* John xi. 47, 48, — 53.

their wealthy *craft was in danger*; though the popular cry was, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians (e)*. They sought their own things; and the things of CHRIST must be sacrificed, because they stood in the way of their civil views. The same spirit hath acted itself under the christian name; it has worked, and still too effectually works in the Papal Tyranny; and in many Protestants too, who love and practice the thing, whilst they are ashamed of and disclaim the name; an imposing, oppressive, persecuting spirit on religious accounts runs desperate lengths this way; it sets up a throne against CHRIST's, and substitutes a kingdom of this world in the room of CHRIST's; a kingdom that consists in worldly grandeur, and in the gratification of the vilest humors and passions of men, in the room of that kingdom that consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Wherever this spirit prevails, whether in public or private persons; it eats out the power of godliness in themselves, and either suppresses or forces the outward practice of it in others. Hereby the vitals of all real, inward, spiritual religion are stabb'd; the name of CHRIST is dishonored; his interest is undermined; his empire over conscience, and with respect to all spiritual things, is invaded; and his express command to his disciples is transgressed; in which he gave them a special charge against such an assuming selfish temper, when it began to work in them *(f)*.

2. We commit this evil, when we seek our own things, to the neglect of the things of CHRIST.

The heads and hearts of some are so deeply engaged and filled with the things of this present life, that they have no value or inclinations for spiritual things. Give them but enough of this world, and who will, for them, may mind the things of another; the things that concern CHRIST's glory and their souls salvation. They, *Gallio*-like (or rather with a worse temper

(e) Acts xix. 27, 28, 29. *(f)* Luke xxii. 24, 25, 26.

temper than he) *care for none of these things (g)*: and like those in the parable, *make light* of CHRIST's call, and *go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize (h)*. Some give themselves up to their gaity and pleasures, others to their business, others to their covetousness, and others to their fame; the last of which was the case of those *Jews* whom CHRIST so sharply rebuked *(i)*: They were ambitious of the honor and applause of men; they put such a value upon that, and their eyes were so dazled with it, that they could not see any worth or beauty in the honor that comes from GOD only; and if they could but secure the first, they did not concern themselves about the last.

3. This evil is committed, when we seek our own things *more* than the things of CHRIST: When, though we don't wholly neglect CHRIST's things, yet our own things bear the greatest sway with us, and command our first and chief regards; as if they were our highest end, and as if our true and proper happiness lay in them.

The temper of our hearts this way discovers itself, when we are more *solicitous* about our own things, than about the things of CHRIST; more eager in our pursuits after them, more touchingly affected with joy or grief, as we get or lose them, as they prosper or decline, rise or fall upon our hands; and more ready to abandon CHRIST and his cause, than to suffer loss ourselves: like the stony-ground hearers, *that heard the word with joy, yet had no root in themselves.—For when persecution or tribulation arose because of the word, by and by they were offended (k)*. Hence some that pretend to seek the things of CHRIST, seek them only in such ways, and at such times, as will cost them little expence or trouble; little labor of body or mind, and little denial of themselves.

(g) Acts xviii. 17. *(h)* Matt. xxii. 5. *(i)* John v. 44.
(k) Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

They pick and chuſe in religion, and attend only to thoſe duties, that can be done without pains or hazard to themſelves; and refuſe thoſe that expoſe them to fatigue or danger. This ſeemed to be too much the caſe of thoſe hinted at in our text, that did not care to take the pains, or undergo the fatigue and difficulty that might attend the ſervice of CHRIST at *Philippi*.

4. We ſeek our own, and not the things of CHRIST, when we ſo ſeek our own, as to hinder or interfere with our ſeeking the things of CHRIST.

We ſometimes ſeek our own affairs with ſuch eagerneſs and intenſeneſs of ſpirit, as puts us out of tune for ſpiritual things: our thoughts and hearts are thereby ſo far entangled, dipped and tinctured with carnal ſenſual things, as makes them unapt for ſpiritual exerciſes, backward to them, heartleſs, unſpiritual and hypocritical in them, and unprofited by them. And when we have been employed in ſpiritual work, a too haſty return to the world, and too eager application to the things of it, often ſtifle and deface ſome promiſing impreſſions that ſpiritual things had made upon us; as CHRIST repreſented in the thorny-ground hearers, in whom *the cares of this world, and the deceitfulneſs of riches, choaked the word, and they became unfruitful* (*l*). At other times we are unſeaſonably employed in our own things, when we ought to be otherwiſe engaged; either our heads, or hearts, or both, are filled with them when we are in the worſhip of GOD; or our hands are filled with them when we ought to be there: They either take up our hearts when we are attending on religious duties, and, like the birds that came upon *Abraham*'s ſacrifice, hinder and endanger the offering; or they take up the time that ought to be ſpent in thoſe duties: This laſt was the caſe of *Martha*, who received a rebuke from CHRIST on that account (*m*): And,

(*l*) Matt. xiii. 22. (*m*) Luke x. 40, 41, 42.

And, O how many are there of *Martha*'s ſpirit; who are guilty of her ſin, and deſerve her reproof!

5. This evil is committed when we ſeek our own things in ſeeking the things of CHRIST; when there is too much of Self ſecretly twiſting and winding itſelf into what we do for CHRIST.

Self hath the moſt artful and flattering charms to allure and deceive us; it puts on divers ſhapes and forms, and under one or another of them ſeeks to inſinuate into all that we do. Self-intereſt, ſelf-eaſe, ſelf-pleaſure, ſelf-opinion, ſelf-honor, ſelf-applauſe, all theſe and many other members of ſelf-love, watch their turns to mingle with, and to corrupt our beſt performances; like the *dead flies*, that *cauſe the Apothecary's ointment to ſend forth a ſtinking ſavour (n)*.

When an obvious appearance of ſelf in any of theſe forms ſtartles our minds, and raiſes our indignation, when we dare not deſignedly own or ſerve it; yea, when we ſeem moſt to abandon and crucify it, and to turn our eyes from it to CHRIST and the things of CHRIST, yet even then it too too often ſlily betrays and leads us captive: And whenever it gets the aſcendency, and hath a ruling governing influence on our actings to or for CHRIST, it ſpoils the whole performance, and turns it into an abomination: As GOD intimated to *Iſrael*, when he taxed them with obſerving religious days *for themſelves*, and *not to him (o)*. Whatever ſuch perſons profeſs, they therein *ſeek their own things, and not the things of* JESUS CHRIST; yea, and never ſeek their own things more than when they pretend to be ſeeking the things of CHRIST: The Apoſtle gives us a remarkable inſtance of this in ſome, that *preached* CHRIST *of envy and ſtrife, to add affliction to his bonds (p)*. Their baſe deſign in that beſt of works was to ruin the Apoſtle, and advance themſelves; or at leaſt, to ſink his character, and raiſe their own.

Some

(n) Eccleſ. x. 1. *(o)* Zech. vii. 5, 6. *(p)* Philip. i. 15, 16.

Some perſons ſeek the things of CHRIST only for their own worldly intereſts: They put on a maſk of religion, and take up the profeſſion and outward practice of it from ſecular views; ſome to make a livelihood of it, others to promote their trade and buſineſs, and others to conciliate the favor and friendſhip of ſome, from whom they have expectations of worldly advantage: Theſe all ſuppoſe *that gain is godlineſs*, and as long as they think ſo will be votaries in religion, and no longer. How juſtly may that reproachful character be applied to them: *They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they ſit before thee as my people; and they hear thy words, but will not do them; for with their mouth they ſhew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetouſneſs (q).*

Others ſeek their own honor, and the gratification of their own pride, in ſeeking the things of CHRIST: They ſeek to recommend themſelves, their own wiſdom, parts and learning, their own piety and zeal, more than CHRIST; and only act for him when the eyes of others are upon them, and becauſe they are ſo. A groſs inſtance of this we have in *Jehu*; who, when he was going to do a noble piece of ſervice for GOD, debaſed and corrupted the whole performance by that vain-glory that courted an applauſe from *Jehonadab*, ſaying to him, *Come with me, and ſee my zeal for the* LORD *(r)*: And CHRIST charged this home on the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, as a reigning ſin in them; who did all things in religion *to be ſeen of men*, and that *they might call them Rabbi (s)*.

The like ſin we are guilty of when we are zealous for ways and notions of our own, becauſe they are our own, and exalt our reaſon; or becauſe they ſuit the general taſte, and are in common vogue, and not becauſe they are CHRIST's: Yea, though they are real corruptions of the goſpel of CHRIST: How ſmartly

(q) Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *(r)* 2 Kings x. 16. *(s)* Matt. xxiii. 5, 6, 7.

ſmartly doth the Apoſtle reprove this evil in others, and how diſtant was he from it himſelf *(t)*?

And there is ſtill a more refined and ſpiritual pride in ſeeking our own honor, which we are apt inſenſibly to ſlide into; and that is, when we ſet up our own righteouſneſs inſtead of CHRIST's, to recommend us to GOD's acceptance; ſeeking righteouſneſs to juſtification *as it were by the works of the law (u)*: And when we lean upon our own ſtrength, and not on CHRIST's for ſpiritual performances. We hereby gratify the natural pride of our own corrupt hearts, which would feign have ſomething to glory in before GOD. We hereby honor ourſelves in GOD's preſence, where we ought to lie proſtrate with the deepeſt abaſement; and we hereby put that crown upon our own heads, which is peculiar to GOD and his CHRIST: For, *of him are ye in* CHRIST JESUS, *who of* GOD *is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption*, to this end and purpoſe, *that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence; and that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the* LORD *(v)*. The proud *Phariſee*, mentioned by CHRIST in *Luke* xviii, was guilty of the ſin I am ſpeaking of; as is plain from the perſons to whom CHRIST ſpoke that parable: *He ſpoke it to certain, who truſted in themſelves that they were righteous*, 9th verſe. But ſure the poor *Publican*'s ſpirit better becomes us; who, in a very affecting ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, guilt and vileneſs, *ſmote upon his breaſt, ſaying*, GOD *be merciful to me a ſinner*, 13th verſe: And the proper language of every true believer or gracious ſoul, is, in effect at leaſt, *Surely in the* LORD *have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength (w)*; as that language ſtands in the ancient prophecies of goſpel-times.

Once more, others ſeek an *indulgence* of their own vile and ſenſual paſſions, luſts, and pleaſures in ſeeking

(t) Gal. i. 9, 10. & vi. 12, 13, 14. *(u)* Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. *(v)* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. *(w)* Iſa. xlv. 24, 25.

ing the things of CHRIST: They seek them as a cloak to their own wickedness, and as the means of a more quiet and unobserved indulgence of them; that conscience may be bribed to peace and silence within, and that the eyes and clamors of others may be shut without. Some think to atone for their wickedness in their moral (or rather immoral) conduct, by their zeal for CHRIST, and their observance of religious duties; and others make a fair shew without, that they may establish a reputation for godliness, and not be suspected of so much wickedness as reigns within, and vents itself in a corner. Yea, the mystery of this wickedness works so far, as to daub over and recommend many a base and sensual work with the specious pretence of religion, as if that altered the nature of things that are in themselves sinful, and would sanctify the most infamous villanies. Thus they abuse the liberty of the Gospel, making that an occasion for the flesh, and become most grosly carnal in spiritual things.

6. We seek our own things, and not the things of CHRIST, when we put no religious respect to CHRIST upon our own things.

We ought to be spiritual in carnal things; to use, enjoy, and improve them, with a respect to CHRIST. Our secular employments should be undertaken in obedience to his authority, who hath called us to them: We are therein to abide and walk with GOD, and to look upon ourselves as doing his work in the duties of our several stations and relations: *Doing every thing heartily as to the* LORD, *knowing we therein serve the* LORD CHRIST; as the Apostle speaks, particularly to servants *(x)*.

All our abilities should have a reference to him, that he may be glorified both by our *bodies and spirits, which are his (y)*. And whatever we enjoy of the good things of this life for necessity, convenience,

(x) Colos. iii. 23, 24. *(y)* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

ence, or delight, ſhould be received with thankfulneſs, uſed with ſobriety, and improved with chearfulneſs to the honor of CHRIST, in ſerving his intereſt, and doing good to others.

Furthermore, we ſhould ſeek his love and favor in and with them; that we may taſte them with the ſweeter and more refined reliſh, as the purchaſe of his blood, and as branches of new covenant mercies; and that we may be ſure there is a bleſſing and not a curſe in them, as they come to us.

But if we ſeek our own things without theſe or ſuch like reſpects to CHRIST, we make them our own in a very guilty manner: We engroſs them to ourſelves, ſeek them only for ourſelves, and conſume them upon ourſelves: Which is to ſhut out CHRIST from the indiſputable claims he hath to them, to rob him of his intereſt in them, and to make ourſelves lords and chief proprietors of what he only lends us in truſt, as ſervants to him. And ſure he that thus ſeeks his own things does not ſeek the things of JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly, Shew the great evil of doing this, *viz. of ſeeking our own things, and not the things of* CHRIST.

Inſtead of a great variety of conſiderations that might be urged to this purpoſe, our time will allow me to offer but the three or four following.

1. Conſider, The excellence of CHRIST's things above all our own.

The things of CHRIST have a ſubſtantial worth and real goodneſs in them: They are things becoming ſuch a glorious One as CHRIST, *who is the brightneſs of the Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon* (*a*). The brighteſt luſtres of the godhead, and of its infinite adorable perfections, with their united, kind, and engaging aſpects on us, are ſo far diſplayed in the things of CHRIST, as to command our

(*a*) Heb. i. 3.

our admiration, love, and praiſe. There is the perfection of beauty, to entertain our ſouls with the nobleſt pleaſure in their views of it, and to mould them into its glorious form; for, ſays the Apoſtle of true believers, *We all with open face beholding as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, even as by the ſpirit of the Lord* (*b*).

There is all-comprehending goodneſs, to fill up our vaſteſt capacities with real, proper and compleat ſatisfaction: *I lead*, ſays CHRIST, *in the way of righteouſneſs, in the midſt of the paths of judgment, that I may cauſe thoſe that love me to inherit ſubſtance, and I will fill their treaſures* (*c*). In all CHRIST's things there is the greateſt fulneſs: Their heights, depths, lengths and breadths ſurpaſs all knowledge (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks (*d*) of his *love*) and their riches are unſearchable: There is ſcope for new diſcoveries, and new pleaſures in every converſe with them; they never glut or cloy, but are always freſh and entertaining; they are unchangeable in their nature, and everlaſting in their duration: They are every way ſuited to ennoble and ſatiate an immortal ſoul, without defect or allay, to the utmoſt lengths of an endleſs immortality.

Now, what are all our own things compared with theſe, that we ſhould ſeek them, and not theſe! The beſt of our own things are empty, mean, contemptible and worthleſs, of an unſatisfying, uncertain and periſhing nature: They die upon our hands, and we muſt quickly die away from them. They debaſe our ſouls, whilſt we with ſelfiſh aims purſue them; they diſappoint, ſurfeit, defile and trouble us whilſt we have them; and leave us worſe than they found us when we loſe them. They will not profit us in the day of wrath; but make that wrath the more intenſely hot againſt us, if we make an idol of

(*b*) 2 Cor. iii. 18. (*c*) Prov. viii. 20, 21.
(*d*) Epheſ. iii. 8, 18, 19.

of them. Are these the things that we seek, and not the things of CHRIST, that so infinitely better deserve our utmost application! What is this, but to catch at a shadow, and let go the substance; to grasp a shining gaudy bubble, which is vanity itself, yea, worse than vanity, instead of the richest reality? In seeking these we *set our eyes on that which is not* (*e*); which consideration of them the wise man turns into the most touching argument against unduly seeking them: *Wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not* (*f*)? *q. d.* "Which at present hath no substance, and in a "little time will have no existence." How great is the sin, folly and madness of preferring things that are not, to things that are most real and abiding! This is to call good evil, and evil good: This is to put the most scornful affront upon CHRIST, and on all things relating to Him, and to fix an everlasting reproach upon our reasonable nature: This is to refuse our only happiness, and to feed upon husks and ashes, that do us more harm than good: And this is to commit the two great evils which GOD complained of backsliding *Israel* for; who had *forsaken him, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water* (*g*).

2. Consider, How unsuitable this is to our character as Christians, or as Ministers of CHRIST.

Are we the Disciples of CHRIST? Do we call ourselves by His name? Is He the High-Priest and Apostle of our profession? Do we profess to make Him our *all*, to esteem Him as *the pearl of great price*, and as *altogether lovely*; to have all our dependence on Him, all our expectations from Him, and to pay all possible honur and obedience to Him? Do we profess to be *pilgrims* and *strangers* on *Earth*, *citizens* of *Heaven*, and *heirs* of *eternal Glory*? If we are christians in truth as well as in name, this is our proper

(*e*) Prov. xxiii. 4, 5. (*f*) Ibid. (*g*) Jer. ii. 13.

proper character, and we are what this character bespeaks us to be.

But, O how unsuitable and contradictory to this high and honorable character; how much beneath and unworthy of its dignity is it, to seek our own things, and not the things of CHRIST! How do we hereby abuse that glorious name by which we are called, turn the lie upon our own profession, and act unlike ourselves!

And is the character that some of us bear, that of ministers of JESUS CHRIST, whose we are, and whom we profess to serve; to whom we have solemnly given up ourselves to serve Him with our spirits in the Gospel; to propagate His interest, and set forth the honor of His name; to make His name, truths, and ways appear glorious; to recommend Him to others in *doctrine, and example, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity* (*h*)? Are we underworkers to CHRIST, stewards in His family, officers in His kingdom, laborers in His vineyard, overseers, shepherds and watchmen of His flock? Which are all characters of trust from CHRIST, and labor for CHRIST; and shall we so meanly betray our trust, refuse or neglect our work, and profane our holy character, as to seek our own, and not the things of JESUS CHRIST? How very base and unworthy is this! What ingenuous confusion, blushing and shame, yea, what holy vehemence of indignation and revenge, should shed themselves upon our minds, when we perceive the least inclinations or workings of our hearts that way! Sure, we should always think we hear the LORD saying to us, as he did to *Baruch*; *Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not* (*i*). No, seek great things for CHRIST, for his interest, truths, and ways, and for the good of immortal souls, that he may be glorified in and by them: *Seek not theirs, but them* (*k*), as the Apostle did.

(*h*) 1 Tim. iv. 12. (*i*) Jer. xlv. 5. (*k*) 2 Cor. xii. 14.

did. Seek not to pleaſe, but to ſave them; and to pleaſe CHRIST in the faithfulneſs, wiſdom, and laborioufneſs of all miniſtrations to them: For *if we ſeek to pleaſe men* (*l*) we forfeit our character, and *are not the ſervants of* JESUS CHRIST (*m*): We are *not to preach ourſelves, but* JESUS CHRIST *the* LORD; to ſeek his things and not our own. Our character, as miniſters of CHRIST, obligeth us to it; and we can by no means approve ourſelves to Him, if we do otherwiſe. The Apoſtle tells us in what a ſelf-denying manner he and others with him acted up to their character herein (*n*): And it would be a noble ambition in us to ſtrive to excel one another in copying after that bright and amiable pattern.

3. Conſider, The abundant care and grace, with which CHRIST hath ſought our things: I mean, the things of our everlaſting peace and ſalvation, of our trueſt bleſſedneſs and glory.

You *know the Grace of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *that though he was rich, yet for our ſakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich* (*o*). He who was true and very GOD; that was *in the form of* GOD in one nature, as properly as he was *in the faſhion of a man* in the other; and *thought it not robbery to be equal with* GOD: Yet *he made himſelf of no reputation, and humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs* for us (*p*). And ſure the Apoſtle's argument from thence; that we ſhould be like-minded with CHRIST, and not ſeek our own things, but the things of others (as he urges it (*q*) in the two foregoing verſes) is ſtill more abundantly ſtrong and pregnant for our ſeeking not our own things, but the things of CHRIST: Who in this ſtupendous ſelf-abaſing and ſelf denying manner hath ſought ours. He, who is the eternal, eſſen-

C tial

(*l*) Gal. i. 10, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. (*m*) 2 Cor. iv. 5. (*n*) 2 Cor. vi. 3, 4, (*o*) 2 Cor. viii. 9. (*p*) Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. (*q*) Ibid. 4, 5.

tial Son of GOD, GOD *over all bleſſed for evermore* (*r*), who had no need of us, and could not be profited by us; this great and glorious perſon hath honored our nature by taking it into a perſonal union with Himſelf, and in that nature went through a courſe of the moſt humble obedience and moſt exquiſite ſufferings from his Father's hand, and from the hands of men and devils, even to death itſelf; and all this He willingly ſubmitted to, that He might thereby work out an everlaſting, perfect righteouſneſs, and obtain eternal redemption for us: And ſo deliver us from the dreadful wrath to come, and raiſe us up to the utmoſt heights of everlaſting, conſummate bleſſedneſs; even us, who were plunged into the deepeſt miſery and wretchedneſs, utterly unable to help ourſelves, and as utterly unworthy that He ſhould help us; even us, who are moſt loathſome in our nature, and obnoxious by our guilt; who had forfeited all his favor, and provoked his higheſt reſentments, as we were enemies, rebels, and traitors againſt Him. Sure, when our hearts are filled with believing realizing thoughts of this ſort, we muſt feel the ſtrongeſt bonds upon us to give up our little ſelves to Him, and to employ the utmoſt of our poor low abilities, not in ſeeking our own things, but the things of ſo great and excellent, ſo infinitely deſerving, gracious, and beneficent a perſon as CHRIST is; who with ſuch wondrous love and grace, reſolution and pains, ſought and obtained an eternal inheritance of glory for us. Will not this unparalleled *love of* CHRIST *conſtrain us, that we, who live, ſhould not live to ourſelves, but to Him who died for us, and roſe again* (*s*)? Shall we not love Him again who thus loved us firſt (*t*); and be fired with a noble, holy ambition to give vent to our love in ſeeking and doing the things that pleaſe Him? Certainly the argument here again holds with double ſtrength to pleaſe CHRIST, which the Apoſtle uſeth for our *pleaſing*

(*r*) Rom. ix. 5. (*s*) 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. (*t*) 1 John iv: 19.

pleasing others for their good to edification; for CHRIST *pleased not himself* (*u*).

4. Consider, The danger of seeking our own things, and not the things of JESUS CHRIST.

Supposing we have received the grace of GOD in truth; yet the more this evil temper prevails in us, the more distance and alienation will arise between CHRIST and us; the more open we shall be to temptation and every other sin, and to the forest rebukes of a temporal and spiritual sort from CHRIST; the more unspiritual we shall be in our walk before Him; the more out of case for communion with Him, and for living to Him; the less honor we shall bring to CHRIST and his ways; the less useful we shall be to others; and the less comfortable in ourselves; the less evidence we shall have for heaven, and the less fitness to go to heaven.

And if this carnal, selfish temper hath a governing sway in any of you; if it commands your hearts, and rules your conduct; it is utterly inconsistent with the truth of grace, and makes the most dangerous opposition against it. Such persons have only the wisdom of the flesh, which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish* (*x*): *Their friendship to the world, is enmity to* GOD *and* CHRIST (*y*), and shuts up their hearts against them. The soul that is full of self in any consideration of it, hath no room for CHRIST: It is self-sufficient, and becomes a GOD to itself, acting from self to self, and turning upon self, like a wheel upon its own axle-tree. This *Dagon* self must fall before CHRIST, if ever he comes into the heart: It is impossible that he and that should live and reign together. What CHRIST speaks in one particular instance of seeking our own things, holds equally true of all the rest: *How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another; and seek not the honor that*

(*u*) Rom. xv. 2, 3. (*x*) Jam. iii. 15. (*y*) Jam. iv. 4.

comes from God *only* (*z*)*?* He ſpeaks of their believing, as an impoſſibility in that circumſtance of things, whilſt they continued to thirſt after the honor and praiſe of men, and not of God. Believing in Christ to ſalvation, is too ſelf-emptying to conſiſt with ſuch a ſelf-ſeeking.

O then, how dangerous is it, thus to ſeek your own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's! How dreadful is the tendency! How diſmal are the conſequences of it! How ruinous and deſtructive is it to your own ſouls! And how tremendous and unutterable is the loſs you will ſuffer thereby! For *what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul? Or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul* (*a*)*?*

Thirdly, Application.

1. Let us turn our eyes into our own boſoms, and try and prove ourſelves, what manner of ſpirit we are of.

Think that thou heareſt Christ ſaying unto thee, as he did to *Mary* after his reſurrection, *Whom ſeekeſt thou?* And ſee what anſwer thy heart can give to that demand. Doſt thou ſeek Christ, and the things of Christ? Or doſt thou ſeek thyſelf and thine own things? Hath the account you have heard of ſeeking our own, and not the things of Jesus Christ, ſuited and deſcribed the temper of thy heart? Or hath that temper been thy averſion and abhorrence? *They that are after the fleſh, do mind*, or favor, *the things of the fleſh; but they that are after the ſpirit, the things of the ſpirit* (*b*). Which of theſe doſt thou ſeek, mind, and reliſh? Which are the choice, the deſire, and the delight of thy ſoul? Which have the governing ſway, and commanding influence on thy heart? Which doſt thou reckon moſt upon, or value thyſelf moſt by? Put theſe, or ſuch

(*z*) John v. 44. (*a*) Matt. xvi. 26. (*b*) Rom. viii. 5.

ſuch like queſtions cloſe to thy own conſcience as in the ſight and preſence of the great heart-ſearching GOD: Labor to be ſerious and impartial in the enquiry: Take heed that ſelf-love don't bribe or corrupt thy conſcience; and if thou art wiſe and careful in obſerving its anſwer, thou mayſt, through the enlightening of the HOLY GHOST, come to ſome knowledge whether thou art a ſeeker of thyſelf or CHRIST, a carnal or a ſpiritual man, a man for this world, or a man for heaven.

2. We ſhould be hereby ſeverally ſtirred up to a ſpirit, contrary to that complained of in our text, not to ſeek our own things, but the things of JESUS CHRIST.

Miniſters ſhould labor to be like-minded with *Timothy*, who naturally cared for CHRIST's things; and to be like the Apoſtle *Paul*, whoſe bright and excellent character in this regard ſhould raiſe within us a noble emulation, that we may be able to ſay with him; *As we were allowed of* GOD *to be put in truſt with the goſpel, even ſo we ſpeak, not as pleaſing men, but* GOD, *who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time uſed we flattering words, as ye know; nor a cloak of covetouſneſs,* GOD *is witneſs; nor of men ſought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others—but we were gentle among you, even as a nurſe cheriſheth her children: So, being affectionately deſirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the goſpel of* GOD *only, but alſo our own ſouls, becauſe ye were dear unto us,* &c (*c*).

Private Chriſtians ſhould join heart and hand with us herein, helping forward the intereſt of CHRIST, in ſoundneſs of faith and holineſs of life; having their *Converſation as it becometh the goſpel of* CHRIST, *ſtanding faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel* (*d*), as the Apoſtle was concerned that theſe *Philippians* might do.

(*c*) 1 Theſ. ii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. (*d*) Philip i. 27.

And is it not high time for thee, O ſinner, to awake out of ſleep? To awake out of thy golden dreams of happineſs here, and to ſeek after CHRIST, that thou mayſt inherit ſubſtance, even riches and honor; yea, durable riches and righteouſneſs that are in Him? Haſt thou not long enough ſported thyſelf with thy own deceivings, and fed upon huſks and aſhes already? O why ſhouldſt thou ſtill ſpend thy labor for that which ſatisfieth not? If thou haſt any regard to thy immortal ſoul, to thy only and eternal bleſſedneſs, thou ſhouldſt now *ſeek the kingdom of* GOD, *and his righteouſneſs* (*e*) in the firſt place, and with the moſt earneſt concern; committing all other things, in the way of thy duty, to GOD, to add them to thee. O how ſhouldſt thou, as a ſelf-empty, and ſelf-deſtroyed ſinner, make out after CHRIST for an intereſt in Him, and in all the bleſſings of His kingdom; that thou mayſt come into its glory, and help to diſplay the luſtres of it.

The conſiderations we have heard, to ſet out the great evil of ſeeking our own things, and not the things of JESUS CHRIST (as theſe conſiderations are ſuitable to our reſpective ſtates, conditions, and characters ſhould be of weight with us ſeverally, to excite us to labor after a contrary drift of heart and life. Think them over in the moſt ſerious, ſolemn, and affecting manner thou canſt, and beg of GOD to impreſs them upon thy heart, and to convey an almighty, gracious, and quickning power with them, by his free Spirit to make them effectual to their deſigned purpoſe; without which it will be found, that I have preached, and you have heard in vain.

The moſt ſpiritual among us have too much of ſelf ſtill working ſecretly in us, and therefore we have need to watch, and pray, and ſtrive yet more and more, in the ſtrength of CHRIST, againſt it; that we may be yet more ſpiritual in all that we do, even

(*e*) Matt. vi. 33.

even in carnal as well as ſpiritual things: That when we converſe with ſpiritual objects, they may ſhed a glory upon us; and when we converſe with carnal objects, we may ſhed a glory on them.

Objection. Poſſibly, ſome may ſay, I hope my heart is right, as to the main, in this matter; and therefore though I am ſenſible that I am not ſo ſpiritual as I ſhould be, and that in many inſtances I ſeek my own things, and not the things of JESUS CHRIST; yet I hope I may be ſafe for heaven as I am.

In anſwer to this I would ſay: If the perſon that makes this objection is moſt touchingly grieved, and humbled before GOD, under a ſenſe of this evil temper of his heart, and doth not allow of it, or give way to it; but earneſtly longs and groans within himſelf for more ſtrength againſt it, and for deliverance from it; and applies by faith to the LORD JESUS CHRIST for that purpoſe; of ſuch an one there is no doubt, but there may be many defects herein conſiſtent with his ſafety.

But if the perſon that makes this objection, doth it with a deſign to ſatisfy conſcience under his low attainments, or to excuſe himſelf from laboring after a more ſpiritual temper of heart; I would briefly ſuggeſt the four following things for more enlarged conſideration.

1. It is a very baſe and unworthy temper in any that profeſs themſelves chriſtians, to be more ſolicitous to know with what degrees of ſelfiſhneſs or worldly-mindedneſs their ſafety may conſiſt, than how they may become more ſpiritual: As if this ſeeking not our own things, but the things of CHRIST, was not a grace or duty worth reaching after for itſelf, but only to ſerve a turn, to ſerve ourſelves and not CHRIST by it: This looks as if ſelf was predominant ſtill. Hence,

2. It may not be ſo ſafe, as ſome may fancy, to indulge themſelves in any lower degrees of ſpirituality,

lity, without earneſtly ſeeking after more. It is very unlike the genius of a true believer, and a dangerous venture to content yourſelves with low degrees of grace and ſpirituality, juſt bordering on a carnal graceleſs ſtate; leſt you ſhould be found to be really juſt within thoſe fatal borders, and ſo ſhould meet with a diſmal, irretrievable diſappointment at laſt. Hence,

3. Even ſuppoſing your ſtate to be ſafe, it is very improbable that you ſhould with any ſtedfaſtneſs or certainty know it to be ſo; you may be ſtill a carnal, ſelf-ſeeking perſon for what you know: And ſure it muſt be very uncomfortable to be in ſuch a condition, that you know not what judgment to make of yourſelf, whether you are ſpiritually alive or dead, or whether you are going to heaven or hell: Yea, great remainders of carnality may open a wide gap for the terrors of GOD to break in upon your conſcience, and to ſpread ſuch thick darkneſs and confuſion there, as ſhall make you conclude in yourſelf, that GOD and CHRIST are your enemies. And that concluſion may be as diſmal to you for the time it laſts, as if they really were ſo. Such *a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* And then,

4. It is doubtleſs highly diſhonorable to CHRIST for believers to behave at ſuch a rate, that it is difficult to gueſs whether they are true believers or no; whether they turn on their own center or on CHRIST, in all that they do; or whether they make Him or themſelves their chief good and higheſt end.

Let us therefore labor with our own ſpirits, and beg of GOD to ſubdue them by his Spirit yet more and more to CHRIST, and to himſelf in CHRIST; that the contrary to this complaint in our text, may be our way and character, that we ſeek *not our own, but the things which are* JESUS CHRIST's.

SERMON

SERMON II.

GOD's Alarm to GREAT-BRITAIN:
OR
An Enquiry into our public Mercies, and Abuſes of them, our Danger, and Way of Deliverance.

Preached in *New Broad-Street*, LONDON, on Occaſion of the general FAST, *January* 9, 1739-40, purſuant to a Declaration of War againſt *Spain*.

AMOS III. 2.

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will puniſh you for all your iniquities.

IN this chapter we have a denunciation of judgments againſt *Iſrael*, together with the grounds and reaſons of it. The prophet introduces the awful meſſage with a ſolemn ſummon of attention to it, ſaying, *ver.* 1. *Hear this word, that the* LORD *hath ſpoken againſt you, O children of* Iſrael, *againſt the whole family, which I brought up from the land of Egypt. q. d.* I am going, O ye *Iſraelites*, to deliver very awakening and affecting tidings, in the name of the LORD; the matter of which is not trivial, but

but exceeding momentous; not of the comfortable, but tremendous ſtrain; nor is it a foreign caſe, but what, in a ſpecial manner, concerns yourſelves, and ſpeaks againſt you, even againſt all the tribes of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, all the deſcendants of *Jacob*'s family, which the LORD brought with an out-ſtretched arm from the land of *Egypt*. Hearken therefore to what I ſay, look upon yourſelves as immediately concerned in it, ſeriouſly conſider and weigh it in your minds; let every one of you lay it to heart. And then, in our text, he tells them what was the ſum of his meſſage to and againſt them, *viz.* That GOD was about to bring ſore and righteous judgments upon them, ſaying, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will puniſh you for all your iniquities.* In theſe words we have,

1. The ſpecial regard GOD had to his people, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth.* As if he ſhould ſay, "My heart has been ſet upon "you, my thoughts of kindneſs have been peculi- "arly towards and concerning you; *I have choſen* "Jacob *to myſelf, and* Iſrael *for my peculiar treaſure* (*f*); "I have taken you into covenant, have manifeſted "myſelf to you, and converſed like a friend with "you; I have diſtinguiſhed you from all other na- "tions by my favor, have made you the objects of my "peculiar care and indulgence, have delivered you "from numberleſs hardſhips and dangers, have given "you frequent victories over your enemies, have "cleared your way thro' many difficulties and diſcou- "ragements, have loaded you with the bleſſings of *Ca-* "*naan*, have ſet my tabernacle among you, and com- "mitted my holy oracles to you. Thus have I made "you a people near to me, put my name upon you, "and dealt graciouſly with you, more than with all "the reſt of the families of the earth put together. "*I*, of mine own good pleaſure, *have choſen you to* "*be a ſpecial people to myſelf, above all people, that* "*are*

(*f*) Pſal. cxxxv. 4.

" *are upon the face of the earth. I did not ſet my* " *love upon you, nor chooſe you, becauſe ye were more* " *in number than any people; for ye were the feweſt* " *of all people*, when ye went into the land of *Egypt:* " *But becauſe I loved you, and becauſe I would keep the* " *oath, which I had ſworn to your fathers, have I* " *brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed* " *you out of the houſe of bondmen, from the hand of* " Pharaoh, *king of* Egypt (*g*)." And, in the greatneſs of his love and favor, he had brought them to all the privileges and grandeur, which they afterwards were poſſeſſed of. But we have,

2. The awful viſitation, which even GOD's regard to them engaged him to bring upon them, *therefore I will puniſh you.* This is ſtrange language! One might have been apt to think, it would not have been, you only have I known, therefore I will puniſh you; but therefore I will pity and pardon, recover, ſpare and ſave you. And with reſpect to the ſpiritual and eternal concerns of thoſe, that are his peculiar people, not merely by external relation and viſible profeſſion, but likewiſe by internal union and ſpecial grace, it is certainly true, that becauſe he loves them, and has a peculiar intereſt in them, therefore he will deal in this merciful manner with them; otherwiſe they never could be ſaved at all. Hence, at one time, GOD ſays, *This people have I formed for myſelf, they ſhall ſhew forth my praiſe. But thou haſt not called upon me*, O Jacob; *but thou haſt been weary of me*, O Iſrael; —— *thou haſt made me to ſerve with thy ſins, thou haſt wearied me with thine iniquities* (*h*). And yet he adds, with ſurpriſing grace, in the very next words, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake, and will not remember thy ſins.* And, at another time, the church ſaid, in view of the Meſſiah, *I will mention the loving-kindneſſes of the* LORD, *and the praiſes of the* LORD, *according to all that the* LORD *hath beſtowed on us, and the*

(*g*) Deut. vii. 6, 7, 8. (*h*) Iſa. xliii. 21—25.

the great goodneſs towards the houſe of Iſrael, *which he hath beſtowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindneſſes. For he ſaid, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: So he was their Savior. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his preſence ſaved them: In his love, and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old* (*i*).

But, with reſpect to temporal affairs, GOD often *takes vengeance* on his own people's *inventions*, while, with regard to ſpiritual concerns, *he forgives them*; as is ſaid of *Moſes* and *Aaron* (*k*), who for their ſin died in the wilderneſs, and were not ſuffered to enter the land of *Canaan*, though they got ſafe to heaven. Hence, in the covenant, which GOD hath made with CHRIST and his ſpiritual ſeed, as ſet out under the type of *David* and his poſterity, he ſays, *If his children forſake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, and keep not my commandments: Then will I viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, and their iniquity with ſtripes. Nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I ſworn by my holineſs, that I will not lie unto* David (*l*). *I will viſit their tranſgreſſion*, is the ſame word in the *Hebrew*, that is rendered in our text, *I will puniſh* you, (אפקד.)

As to *Iſraelites indeed*, the true children of GOD, though he viſits their iniquities with temporal judgments, it is with a deſign of love, and of advantage to their ſouls. For *by this ſhall the iniquity of* Jacob *be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin* (*m*). Sincere believers themſelves, when overtaken with a fault, *are chaſtned of the* LORD, *that they ſhould not be condemned with the world* (*n*). And *whom*

(*i*) Iſa. lxiii 7, 8, 9. (*k*) Pſal. xcix. 6, 8. (*l*) Pſal. lxxxix. 30—35. (*m*) Iſa. xxvii. 9. (*n*) 1 Cor. xi. 32.

whom the LORD *loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*; — he corrects them *for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness* (*o*). But as to those, that are his people only in name and profession, temporal judgments are seizures of wrath, and but the beginnings of more fearful executions, which, if they die in that state, will certainly be made upon them for their sins in the world to come. And, taking the bulk of a professing people together, as inclusive of those whose hearts are right with GOD, and of those who have only a name to live, but are dead, GOD will, in times of great degeneracy and departure from him, severely punish them, for the vindication of his own holiness, and avenging the quarrel of his covenant. Hence we have,

3. The ground and reason of this, and that was their iniquities. *I will punish you for all your iniquities.* As if he should say, "I have told you, that, if you should forsake my law, I would do it. And now, as you have grievously revolted from me, and committed innumerable heinous crimes against me, notwithstanding my great and multiplied favors toward you, I will keep to the rule of my covenant in bringing desolations upon you. I will surely visit you with my judgments for all your iniquities."

In further speaking to these words, and adapting them to the occasion of this solemn assembly, I shall, by divine assistance, consider,

I. What have been *Great-Britain*'s eminent mercies.

II. What have been our abuses of those mercies.

III. What reason there is to expect, that GOD should visit us with judgments for them. And, for an application of the whole, we shall enquire,

IV. What

(*o*) Heb. xii. 6—10.

IV. What courſe is to be taken for preventing ſuch awful viſitations. Let us,

I. Conſider what have been *Great-Britain*'s eminent mercies. Theſe have been exceeding remarkable and abundant, peculiar and diſtinguiſhing: Were I to ſet them forth in a full detail, the preſent diſcourſe would not be ſufficient for that alone. I ſhall therefore but briefly hint a few of them under three heads, with a view to the humbling of our ſouls before GOD, under a ſenſe of the aggravated ſins, that have been committed againſt them. We will begin with,

1. Our temporal mercies, which purely relate to the things of this life. How is our country encompaſſed with goodneſs and mercy on every ſide! We live in a *Canaan*-like land, where we are fed to the full with all things neceſſary for the ſubſiſtence, convenience and delight of life. How plentiful and various are the products of our fertile ſoil, of our manufactures at home, and of our trade both at home and abroad! And how little have we known of that common ſcarcity and want, which other nations have felt, and would have been much more diſtreſſed with, had they not received ſupplies from us! GOD *hath not left himſelf without witneſs* amongſt us, *in that he has done us good, and given us rain from heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs* (*p*). What a guarded ſituation likewiſe have we by the ſeas around us, and what healthful ſeaſons have we been favored with! How many, even ſcores of years, have we been preſerved by a kind providence from the peſtilence, whilſt other nations, and ſome not far diſtant, have been awfully viſited with that beſom of deſtruction, and we ourſelves have ſometimes been alarmed with fears, and brought into the neareſt

(*p*) Acts xiv. 17.

neareſt danger of its breaking in, and making a dreadful ſweep amongſt us!

Many of us can hardly forget the terror of our expectations in the year 1721, when the plague raged at *Marſeilles*, and we were called upon from the throne, to keep a day of ſolemn humiliation, faſting and prayer, for averting that terrible judgment from us. And O with what ſtrictneſs, zeal and fervor, and with what earneſt care, and ſolicitude about the event, was that day generally obſerved, when every one looked upon his own life, as in immediate danger, and trembled for fear of GOD's judgments, leſt they ſhould ſpeedily ruſh into his own doors, and be executed upon his own perſon and family! Our faſts have ſeldom been kept with ſo much ſolemnity, eſpecially by the inhabitants of this great city, as that was; and GOD was graciouſly intreated to ſpare us. So that now we have been preſerved from that diſmal calamity for a much greater number of years together, than this nation had been for many ages before.

And though we may not apprehend our danger now to be ſo exceeding near and formidable, as it ſeemed to be then; yet GOD has many arrows in his quiver, and can eaſily reach us, before we are aware, by famines or earthquakes, by the peſtilence, or the ſword, which is now drawn, and which, for ought we know, may, notwithſtanding our ſanguine hopes, be ſheathed in ſome of our own blood. And as we have as great, or greater reaſon than ever to fear, that the Almighty has a controverſy with us for our abounding iniquities, it concerns us to be as ſerious and upright with him in the humiliations and prayers of this day, as ever any people were on days of the like nature. But to go on a little farther with a review of our temporal mercies.

What a happy, peaceful, mild, and gentle government do we enjoy, under our gracious ſovereign King *GEORGE* the ſecond! And for how many

years have we had the privileges of a free people, under the protection and advantage of laws of our own making, whilſt other nations lie under the cruel yoke of tyranny, oppreſſion, and arbitrary power! How ſecure and undiſturbed are our lives, liberties, and properties, as men and *Britons*, whilſt other countries are ranſacked, depopulated and impoveriſhed, and ſurviving natives injuriouſly deprived of all that is dear and valuable to themſelves and their poſterity! And with what freedom have we lived from the amazing terrors of war, whilſt other parts of the world have been fields of blood, continually ſurprized with contending forces, and diſtreſſing ſieges, with the dreadful noiſe and clattering of arms, with the diſmal ſhrieks, and expiring groans of the wounded, and with the horrible ſpectacle of the dead carcaſſes of their neareſt and deareſt friends!

Who can reckon up the multitude and the greatneſs of our mercies of theſe kinds! We have known little, and comparatively nothing, of thoſe days and nights of horror, from invaſions and civil wars, which our fathers felt and have told us of, and which ſometimes we have been threatned with, and may now be juſt at hand. But hitherto GOD has wonderfully ſpared us, and given us frequent occaſions, ſince the glorious revolution under the great King *WILLIAM*, to ſubſtitute him for *Deborah*, and introduce him into her ſong, when ſhe ſaid, *The high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceaſed, they ceaſed in* Iſrael, *until that I* Deborah *aroſe, that I aroſe a mother in* Iſrael. *Speak ye, that are delivered from the noiſe of archers in the places of drawing water; there ſhall they rehearſe the righteous acts of the* LORD, *even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in* Iſrael: *Then ſhall the people of the* LORD *go down to the gates* (*q*). But,

2. Our

(*q*) Judg. v. 6, 7, 11.

2. Our mercies have been ſtill greater with regard to religious concerns, and to ſpiritual and eternal bleſſings. How inexpreſſible have been the loving-kindneſſes of this ſort, that have followed us through a ſeries of many years, and even of ages paſt! How long have we been favored with the light and glad tidings of the Goſpel of the grace of GOD! Soon after the *Gentiles* were admitted into this glorious privilege, the inhabitants of this northern iſle, tho ſo far diſtant from *Paleſtine*, were taken in as heirs of ſalvation. So early was the Goſpel brought into our land, that it is hard to trace it back to its firſt introduction hither. But, though very fabulous ſtories have been invented by the monks, and have diſguiſed our accounts of it, it is, with good grounds, generally believed to have been within a few years after the death of CHRIST. The moſt current opinion, not without ſome degree of probability, for ſome ages was, that *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* firſt preached to the *Britons:* But later enquiries have found exceptions to it; and ſome have thought, that the great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles* planted the Goſpel here, between the time of his firſt imprisonment at *Rome*, and his return to *Jeruſalem*, in which ſeaſon he preached in *Spain*, and in ſeveral weſtern countries: However, it is not to be fairly denied, that the light of ſalvation very ſoon ſhone on theſe dark corners of the earth. And we are told by hiſtorians of good credit, that *Lucius*, a *Britiſh* king in the ſecond century, was the firſt chriſtian king in the world; that *Britain* was the firſt province, which embraced the Goſpel by public authority, and that *Conſtantine* the great, the firſt chriſtian emperor, was of *Britiſh* extract (*r*).

(*r*) Whoever is deſirous of ſeeing what has been ſaid, about the earlieſt time of the Goſpel's being preached in this iſland, may conſult *Fox*'s Acts and Monuments, vol. I. book II. *Fuller*'s Church Hiſtory of *Britain*, p. 6 and 8. *Rapin*'s Hiſtory of *England*, vol. I. p. 28. and *Collier*'s Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, to whom the laſt mentioned author refers.

And though in following ages the light of evangelical truth was overſpread with the groſſeſt darkneſs of popery; yet as ſoon as the reformation began to dawn in *Germany*, it made its way to us, and chriſtianity was recovered from the ſuperſtition and idolatry, the frauds, cruelties and tyranny, which had defaced its glory. And with what ſignal appearances of providence, has the Bible been handed down to us in our mother-tongue, whilſt in many other countries this key of knowledge is taken away from the common people! With what a faithful, judicious and godly miniſtry have we been bleſſed, for a ſucceſſion of ages! And what a large inheritance has CHRIST had amongſt us! Yea, there are ſtill, bleſſed be His name, remaining gales of the Spirit, breathing upon the ſouls of ſome, to enlighten, convince and convert them; and upon the ſouls of others, to eſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, edify, comfort and ſanctify them. How many churches of CHRIST are there ſtill kept up, as lights in our land, while the candleſtick is removed from other places! And with what undiſturbed peace do we enjoy our religious liberties of worſhipping GOD, according to our conſciences, under the happy influence of our preſent ſovereign's reign; while the teachers in other countries are driven into corners, and the people ſeek bread for their ſouls at the peril of their lives!

Where is the kingdom, that can be compared with this, for the light of the Goſpel, and the continued preſervation of the dear Redeemer's cauſe, notwithſtanding all attempts, that have been made by ſubtilty and force, and by corruptions in doctrine and practice to deſtroy it? It may, in a manner, be ſaid of *Great-Britain*, as it was formerly of a choſen people, *God ſhews his word unto* Jacob, *his ſtatutes and his judgments unto* Iſrael. *He hath not dealt ſo with any nation; and as for his judgments*, we may add concerning vaſt multitudes, *they have not known them. Praiſe ye the Lord* (*s*). And,

3. Our

(*s*) Pſal. cxlvii. 19, 20.

3. Our mercies have been exceeding great, in the wonderful deliverances, which God has wrought for us, both with regard to our civil and religious interests, when they have been upon the borders of ruin. When the dark night of popery had long covered this part of the world, by what an amazing turn of affairs did a day of deliverance dawn in the reign of *HENRY* the eighth! And when the mists and clouds of antichristian error and impositions were gathering round about us, and hanging over our heads again, how did GOD scatter them in the reigns of *EDWARD* the sixth, and of Queen *ELIZABETH!* How seasonably and unexpectedly did he appear for us, in the utter destruction of the *Spanish Armada*, which threatned to invade and enslave us, in the year 1588; and in the discovery of the popish plot, when it was just ripe for execution, in the year 1605! With what struggles, and through how many difficulties and dangers were our laws and religion, our liberties, rights and properties contended for in the reigns of *JAMES* the first, the two *CHARLES*'s, and of *JAMES* the second, till GOD restored and confirmed them by that wonder of providence, the revolution, under King *WILLIAM* of glorious memory, in the year 1688, just an hundred years after the defeat of what the *Spaniards* presumptuously called, in the haughtiness of their confidence, *The invincible Armada.*

And when all was in the utmost danger of being overset again, by bringing in the popish pretender, at the close of the late Queen *ANNE*'s reign, and every honest heart was meditating terror, and could see no way of escape, how did GOD's own arm bring salvation, without shedding one drop of blood, in the timely and peaceable accession of the renowned King *GEORGE* the first to the throne of these kingdoms, on the ever memorable first of *August* 1714! And how signally has divine providence ever since watched over us, and guarded our excellent

conſtitution, the ſucceſſion in the proteſtant line, and the civil and religious liberties of the ſubject, that were then ſo ſurpriſingly recovered and eſtabliſhed, ſo thankfully accepted, and ſo abundantly rejoiced in! How ſpeedily was the *Preſton* rebellion ſuppreſſed; and how remarkably have the ſecret and open deſigns and attempts of *Sweden*, *France*, and *Spain*, and other powers abroad, and of inveterate enemies, papiſts and others, at home, been diſappointed, which from time to time have been formed againſt us! So that we may well adopt the Pſalmiſt's words, as hitherto applicable to our *Britiſh Iſrael*, ſaying, *If it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide, now may* Iſrael *ſay*; *if it had not been the Lord, who was on our ſide, when men roſe up againſt us: Then they had ſwallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled againſt us*; *then the waters had overwhelmed us, the ſtream had gone over our ſoul*; *then the proud waters had gone over our ſoul. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our ſoul is eſcaped, as a bird out of the ſnare of the fowlers*; *the ſnare is broken, and we are eſcaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth* (*t*). May this ſong of praiſe be ever upon our hearts and lips, and our occaſions for it be perpetually renewed and growing, till time ſhall be no more! But, alas! we have ſad reaſon to fear, that another ſort of ditty, of the melancholy ſtrain, may ſoon be put into our mouths, if we conſider,

II. What have been our abuſes of theſe eminent mercies. Surely, never was a nation more loaded with favors and benefits, and, at the ſame time, more baſe and ungrateful to GOD in their forfeitures and abuſes of them. How have we rioted upon the bounties of providence! Has not our plenty been turned into means and occaſions of feeding our pride and ambition, intemperance, luxury and debauchery, and

(*t*) Pſal. cxxiv. throughout.

and been used as an artillery against GOD, instead of our being led to repentance by his goodness and forbearance! Have not our long continued peace and liberty degenerated into contention and licentiousness! And when GOD has so signally delivered us over and over again from popery, slavery, and arbitrary power, have we not been like *Israel* of old, who *sang his praises, but soon forgat his wondrous works* (*u*)! How little improvement has been made of our civil and religious privileges! How unthankful have we been for them! How discontented with them! And what murmurings have been heard against the powers, that protect us in the enjoyment of them! Is there not too much ground for his Majesty's late complaint (*x*), of the heats and animosities, which, with the greatest industry, have been fomented throughout the kingdom, as one of the chief encouragements to the court of *Spain*; and of the unhappy divisions amongst his subjects, as the only hopes of the enemies of his government?

And O how unfruitful have we been under the means of grace! How have the grand important doctrines of the Gospel, and all the glorious peculiarities of the christian scheme been corrupted, denied and ridiculed; its sacred ordinances shamefully prostituted by some, and neglected by others; its holy days profaned, and all its obligations violated! How has iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold! Evil men and seducers have become worse and worse; mere professors of CHRIST's name have grown more and more loose, corrupt and carnal; and the children of GOD themselves, true believers, have too much left their first love, and declined in their holy zeal and fervor, spirituality and heavenly-mindedness, in the life and power of religion, and in their exemplary conversation: So that it may be said of many of them, *What do ye more*

(*u*) Psal. cvi. 12, 13. (*x*) See the King's last speech to both houses of parliament, *November* 15, 1739.

than others? What difference is there between you and them? Wherein do ye excel them? Or wherein are ye visibly distinguished from them?

Has not the Holy Spirit of GOD been grieved, and provoked to withdraw from our solemn assemblies? O how small is the number of converts, or of souls, that are asking the way to *Sion* with their faces thitherward! And how little discernible is the growth and edification, the liveliness and progressiveness of GOD's own people in his ways! The good are manifestly grown worse, and the bad are become extremely wicked. How little do the beauties of holiness shine in the one, and how monstrously vile are the other! How few are there, that bear a brave and public testimony for GOD, and CHRIST, and religion, and against sin and error! And what multitudes are there, that openly profane the name of the LORD, and are guilty of all abominable vices! What horrible cursing and swearing, drunkenness and uncleanness, perjuries and lying, dishonesty and deceit, backbiting, hatred and oppressions, rapine and murders; and what impudence in sinning, and in throwing contempt upon all that is sacred, is our land defiled with! Is not the crown fallen from our heads? Is not our glory in great measure departed? Are we not like *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* for wickedness? And must not heathen nations themselves reproach us, and rise up in judgment against us?

And when we speak of religion, have we much more than the name? Alas! we have too little of the thing. We have still indeed something of the form, though not much of that neither; but where is the power of godliness? In how few is this seen, and felt, and displayed in its glory! Surely, the LORD has a controversy with us; the degeneracy of a professing interest, of his churches and people, is enough of itself to bring down judgments upon us. And *if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end*

end be of them, that obey not the Goſpel(y)? If they, that ſhould ſtand in the gap, have themſelves provoked the LORD, what can be expected, but that terrible indignation ſhould break out againſt us? And may not what *Moſes* ſaid of *Iſrael*, be too much applied to them? *They have corrupted themſelves; their ſpot is not the ſpot of his children; they are a perverſe and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Is he not thy Father, that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee* (z)? This leads us to conſider,

III. What reaſon there is to fear, that GOD will viſit us with judgments for all theſe iniquities, and abuſes of his mercies. And here your time will allow me only to ſuggeſt the four or five following things.

1. Our provocations are exceeding great. The more mercies we have been favored with, and the greater our abuſes of them, and ſinnings againſt them have been, the more exceedingly heinous and urging are our crimes. We cannot ſin at ſo cheap a rate as others, that have not enjoyed our privileges; it is at the expence of greater light and mercies, of greater means and aſſiſtances, of greater checks and reſtraints, and of greater obligations, than others have come under; and, by conſequence, our iniquities are committed with greater ingratitude and diſhonor to GOD, with greater contempt of him and outrage againſt him, with greater violence to ourſelves, and ſo with higher aggravations, than the iniquities of others. We hereby provoke the LORD to jealouſy, and to anger, at an uncommon rate, as *Jeſhurun* did, while *he waxed fat, and kicked, and forſook the God who made him, and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation.*—— But *when the Lord ſaw it, he abhorred them, becauſe of the provoking of his ſons and daughters; and he ſaid, I will hide my face from them, I will ſee what their end ſhall be: For they are a very froward generation, in*

(y) 1 Pet. iv. 17. (z) Deut. xxxii. 5, 6.

whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: And I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in my anger (*a*), &c. Hence,

2. The honor of GOD, as the great governor of the world, is concerned to shew his righteous resentments against a professing people, that are guilty of such exceeding high provocations. He will indeed hereafter throughly vindicate the glory of his justice and grace, in the free pardon, and eternal salvation of every true believer, on account of the blood and righteousness of his SON; he will do this with demonstrative evidence, when things come to be set in a clear and open light before all minds, at the day of the general judgment. But, while we are in this world, hypocrites and real believers are intermingled in their profession; and their respective states before GOD are invisible to human eyes: So that the bulk of mankind can judge of his providential conduct toward his heritage, only by external appearances. If therefore a people that profess his name, and are indulged with the blessings of providence and grace, and visibly owned for his; if such a people were to be always highly favored in his outward dispensations, how unbecomingly soever they behave, and notwithstanding their obvious and multiplied abominations, What would the men of this world think of GOD, and of his government? Would they not entertain injurious notions of him, and reproach his sacred, great and reverend name, as if he were not, what his word says he is, of *purer eyes than to behold evil*, or than to *look on iniquity* (*b*), without the utmost detestation? Would they not be ready to say, on the contrary, that he is a favorer of his people's sins, connives at them, and has no resentment against all their ingratitude and disobedience, though attended with

(*a*) Deut. xxxii. 15—27. (*b*) Habak. i. 13.

with the higheſt aggravations? And would not his enemies blaſpheme his adorable excellencies on that account?

But GOD will reſcue his ſpotleſs name from reproach, by letting the world ſee, that though he loves his people, he hates their ſins; and he will vindicate his own honor, by ſhewing his ſtrong diſpleaſure againſt them. Hence he *ſaid to* Moſes *and* Aaron, *Becauſe ye believed me not, to ſanctify me in the eyes of the children of* Iſrael; *therefore ye ſhall not bring this congregation into the land, which I have given them* (*c*). And afterwards, *The Lord ſpake unto* Moſes, *ſaying, Get thee up into this mountain* Abarim, *unto mount* Nebo; —— *and behold the land of* Canaan, *which I give unto the children of* Iſrael *for a poſſeſſion*; *and die in the mount, whither thou goeſt up, and be gathered to thy people, as* Aaron *thy brother died in mount* Hor, *and was gathered to his people*; *becauſe ye treſpaſſed againſt me, among the children of* Iſrael, *at the waters of* Meribahkadeſh, *in the wilderneſs of* Zin; *becauſe ye ſanctified me not in the midſt of the children of* Iſrael (*d*). In like manner when *Nadab* and *Abihu offered ſtrange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not* (*e*), and ſo ſinned in not keeping cloſe to divine inſtitution, relating to the worſhip of GOD, *There went out a fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord, who had ſaid, I will be ſanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.* So likewiſe when *David* had been guilty of his horrid ſin, in the caſe of *Bathſheba* and *Uriah*, and was brought to a deep conviction of it, ſaying, *I have ſinned againſt the Lord*; the Prophet Nathan *ſaid unto* David, *The Lord hath put away thy ſin*; *thou ſhalt not die* (*f*), i. e. he has pardoned it, and put it away from his avenging eye, with reſpect to a law-charge of guilt, that it may not bring thee under condemnation; and thou ſhalt not die eternally for

(*c*) Numb. xx. 12. (*d*) Deut. xxxii. 48—51. (*e*) Levit. x. 1, 2, 3. (*f*) 2 Sam. xii. 13.

for it, nor shalt thou be cut off by an untimely death, on its account. *Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child, that is born to thee, shall surely die* (*g*); and *the sword shall never depart from thine house* (*h*). Hence,

3. The threatnings of GOD's word give us reason to fear his bringing judgments upon us. He has said to his people, *If ye will walk contrary to me, then will I also walk contrary to you* (*i*). And he recites various judgments in that chapter, such as the sword, pestilence, famine, and driving them into captivity; declaring, after a denunciation of each of these, that *if they still would not be reformed, nor hearken to him, he would walk contrary to them, even in fury, and punish them yet seven times more for their sins.* So at another time, taking notice that *their transgressions were many, and their backslidings increased, shall I not visit for these things? says the* Lord: *And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this* (*k*)? Yea, speaking of the standing rule of his proceedure with all nations, he says, *At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them* (*l*); that is, then I will alter the course of my dispensations toward them, and visit them with judgments instead of mercies, as men use to act, when they have been offended, and repent of any design or proposal of benefit towards others. And the truth of GOD is concerned to fulfil his comminations, as well as promises; with regard to both of which the Apostle, speaking of CHRIST, says, *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself* (*m*). Hence,

4. The

(*g*) 2 Sam. xii. 14. (*h*) Ibid. ver. 10. (*i*) Levit. xxvi. 23, 24. (*k*) Jer. v. 7, 9. (*l*) Jer. xviii. 9, 10. (*m*) 2 Tim. ii. 12, 13.

4. The examples GOD has made of other communities, and particularly of his profeſſing people, for their iniquities, may juſtly raiſe our fears of his doing the ſame by us. How often were his threatnings executed in a terrible manner upon *Iſrael* for their provocations in the wilderneſs, and in the land of *Canaan?* How frequently, upon various revolts, were they viſited, in the way of his judgments, with the famine, ſword and peſtilence, till at length he ſent them into a ſevere captivity for ſeventy years? And after their reſtoration to their own country, when the meaſure of their iniquity was filled up, in their oppoſition to CHRIST, and crucifying him, and in their perſiſting afterwards to reject the exalted Savior, and all the light and grace of the Goſpel, under the miniſtrations of his ſervants, attended with the miraculous gifts and operations of the Holy Ghoſt; how dreadfully and punctually were our bleſſed LORD's predictions againſt them fulfilled, in the deſtruction of their temple, city, and nation, and of their civil, as well as eccleſiaſtical polity and government! And how are they followed with divine vengeance, as a ſcattered, deſpicable, abhorred and abandoned people to this very day!

And O how fearfully have the awful warnings of the SON of GOD, in the ſecond and third chapters of the *Revelation*, been turned into executions on the ſeven famous churches of *Aſia*, for their various offences! They are utterly ſunk long ago, the Alcoran of *Mahomet* hath taken place of the Goſpel of CHRIST for many ages there, and no footſteps remain of any of thoſe churches, or of that glory, which formerly ſhone among them. And what are we, that GOD ſhould not make equal examples of us, who have ſinned againſt ſo much light, and ſo many mercies, as we have done, under his great long-ſuffering and patience for ſcores of years? To all this we may add, that,

5. GOD

5. GOD has already began to take up a controverſy with us. *Gray hairs are here and there upon us*, as was ſaid of *Ephraim*, *and yet we know it not* (*n*). All that has been hinted about GOD's withdrawing his Spirit, by reaſon of our abounding provocations, is, together with our inſenſibility under it, a ſad inſtance of his *hiding himſelf* (*o*) from us, and *ſending leanneſs into our ſouls* (*p*); and ſo is his ſuffering a ſpirit of diviſion, and even of infatuation, to ſpread amongſt us, relating to our civil and religious intereſts. And as the ſword has always been reckoned among GOD's judgments, it is now drawn againſt us. The neceſſity of our recourſe, at length, to arms ariſes from the long rebukes of Providence, in the *Spaniard*'s injuries and oppreſſions, that grew too heavy to be born; and if, for the puniſhment of our ſins, GOD ſhould fight againſt us in this war, all the violence, that has been offered to our merchants and ſailors, will fall with greater fury upon the whole kingdom.

And O! in what an affecting manner doth the uncommon rigor of the ſeaſon, which has been extremely diſtreſſing for about a fortnight paſt, and ſeems likely to continue, declare war, as it were from heaven, againſt us! What dreadful havock has it already made! What loſſes and miſeries has it brought upon thouſands of our nation! What a ſtop has it put to our merchandiſe and trade abroad, and to many branches of our buſineſs at home! What terrible deſolation has it made upon our ſhipping! What prodigious damage has it done on our ſeas, rivers, and wharfs, in our ſtreets, and in ſeveral parts of the country! How moving is the calamity of the poor, who are now become double objects of charity, as their wants are greater, and neceſſary proviſions are dearer, and their opportunities of earning reliefs are leſs than uſual! How many are there, that have neither food to eat, nor fire, nor work to warm them; nor hardly houſes to ſhelter them, beds to

(*n*) Hoſ. vii. 9. (*o*) Iſa. xlv. 15. (*p*) Pſal. cvi. 15.

to lie on, or cloaths to cover them! And how many poor creatures have loſt the uſe of their limbs, and others their lives, by the ſeverity of the froſt! What further terrors it ſhall ſpread amongſt us, GOD only knows. *He caſteth forth his ice like morſels: Who can ſtand before his cold* (*q*)*?*

We may juſtly look upon all theſe touching events, as puniſhments of this nation for its iniquities, and as ſo many ſpecimens of that controverſy, which the great and offended JEHOVAH has with us, and will ſtill further purſue againſt us, if theſe are loſt upon us, and if, notwithſtanding all theſe, we will not hearken to him. This leads us, for an application of the whole, to enquire,

IV. What courſe is to be taken for preventing ſuch awful viſitations.

Though our caſe is very threatning and dangerous; yet, bleſſed be GOD, it is not deſperate: There may ſtill be hope in our end, if he ſhall graciouſly enable us to take a right way before him, ſuch as the government and his providence, in a particular manner, call us to this day; and that lies, in a few words, in ſolemn humiliation, faſting and prayer, repentance and reformation.

Public national ſins muſt be followed with public national breaking them off by repentance, and returning to the LORD; or elſe, ſooner or later, with public national judgments, whatever our private and perſonal ſtate and condition be before GOD, with regard to our ſpiritual and eternal welfare. For public communities, or bodies politic, are dealt with, as ſuch, only in this world; ſince, in the other, every one will be called, merely in his ſingle, perſonal capacity, to *give an account of himſelf to God* (*r*). The intereſts of communities on earth have no concern in the judgment of the great day, any farther than each perſon contributed, in his ſtation, to their guilt and miſery;

(*q*) Pſal. cxlvii. 17. (*r*) Rom. xiv. 12.

miſery; and his ſin therein is to be brought into conſideration, either for its being charged upon him perſonally, or for its being publicly blotted out, according as he ſhall then be found, either in a ſtate of condemnation, or of juſtification before GOD. But all the bodies politic of this world, and the relations we therein bear one to another, will then be diſſolved; and conſequently GOD's dealings with them, as ſuch, muſt be here, or not at all. When therefore dangers lie at the door of kingdoms and nations, the only method of preventing them, according to GOD's ordinary rule of proceedure in his government of this world, is national humiliation, faſting and repentance for, and departure from, the provoking evils, that have incenſed his wrath againſt us, with earneſt ſupplication and prayer for national forgiveneſs of national ſins.

Thus GOD has laid down the ſtanding maxim of his government, ſaying, *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if that nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil, that I thought to do unto them* (*s*). Accordingly he ſaid to *Iſrael*, *Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rent your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs, and repenteth of the evil. Who knows if he will return and repent, and leave a bleſſing behind him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God? Blow ye the trumpet in* Zion, *ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly. Gather the people, ſanctify the congregation, aſſemble the elders, gather the children and thoſe that ſuck the breaſts: Let the bridegroom go forth of his chambers, and the bride out of her cloſet: Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar; and let them ſay, Spare thy people,*

(*s*) Jer. xviii. 7, 8.

people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen ſhould rule over them: Wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people; Yea, the Lord will anſwer, and ſay to his people, Behold, I will ſend you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye ſhall be ſatisfied therewith: And I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen; but I will remove far off from you the northern army, &c (*t*).

GOD mercifully promiſed his people *Iſrael*, that, whenever he might bring them into the greateſt diſtreſs, *If they ſhould confeſs their iniquity*,—and *their uncircumciſed heart were humbled, and they ſhould accept the puniſhment of their iniquity*, as righteouſly inflicted upon them, *Then he would remember his covenant, and not caſt them away, nor utterly deſtroy them* (*u*), with much more to the ſame purpoſe. Hence King *Solomon*, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, humbly pleaded with GOD, that if at any time *his people ſhould go out to battle*, or *be ſmitten down before the enemy*, or *ſhould be carried into captivity*; or if *there ſhould be famine, peſtilence, blaſting, mildew*, and the like, *in their land for their treſpaſſes*; and *they ſhould bethink themſelves, ſaying, We have ſinned and have done perverſly, and committed wickedneſs, and ſhould pray to him, and return with all their heart and ſoul to him*, that *then he would hear their prayer, and forgive, and maintain their cauſe*, &c. (*x*). And you know the wonderful ſucceſs of a like courſe among the poor *Ninevites*, tho' they were heathens; when, upon *Jonah*'s carrying a meſſage of deſtruction to them, *they believed God, and proclaimed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth from the greateſt even to the leaſt of them; and when the King aroſe from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with ſackcloth, and ſat in aſhes, and cauſed it to be proclaimed, ſaying, — Let every one cry mightily to God, yea, let them turn every one from his*

(*t*) Joel ii. 12—20. (*u*) Levit. xxvi. 40—45.
(*x*) 1 Kings viii. 33—53.

his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not (*y*)*?* We are told, in the language of men, when they alter their measures, that *God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said*, under a tacit condition at least, *he would do unto them, and he did it not.* O that the like conduct, and the like happy event, might now be found amongst us!

The LORD has indeed numberless times, and for many years, saved and delivered us, as he often did *Israel, for his name's sake* (*z*)*:* But we cannot expect, any more than they could, that public calamities should always be kept off; unless we are brought to solemn humiliation, prayer and reformation. And as every one of us is a part of the sinning community, we should begin with our own iniquities, and bitterly lament them, together with all the sins of the nation, and, humbly relying on the atonement and advocacy of the LORD JESUS, importunately beg forgiveness of GOD, and grace to turn us and others from the provoking evils, that abound amongst us.

And though the present appearance of the war may not be so dismal and affrightning, as it sometimes has been; yet let us not think ourselves secure, nor trust in an arm of flesh: For GOD can easily blast our strongest hopes; can disperse our fleets, or shatter them to pieces, and sink them in the mighty waters by stormy winds which fulfil his word; or he can spirit the forces on one side, and intimidate those on the other, to such a degree, that one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousands to flight. Though the present cloud may seem to be but of the bigness of a man's hand; yet it may soon spread with blackness and darkness over the whole face of the heavens, and break down in terrible storms upon our guilty heads. There are formidable

(*y*) Jonah iii. 7—9. (*z*) Psal. cvi. 8.

formidable indications of much greater oppoſition and danger, than have yet opened themſelves: Uncommon ſwarms of papiſts are hovering every where about us, and numberleſs other enemies to our tranquillity, happineſs and ſafety, are lurking within our own bowels, and watching for opportunities of betraying us to, and ſiding with ſuch powers abroad, as may join in the war againſt us: The great Governor of the world can only tell, what awful confuſion the preſent poſture of affairs may iſſue in.

Let us therefore be deeply abaſed before the LORD, and be earneſt in prayer for ourſelves and our dear country, that we may be ſtill delivered from impending judgments; or that, however it may fare with the community in general, we perſonally and particularly may find favor in his ſight; and eſpecially, that we may have free remiſſion of all our treſpaſſes through the blood of CHRIST, and may ſtand accepted in him to eternal life. And if things are brought to ſuch an extremity, that the holy and jealous GOD will not be intreated for our land, we may think we hear him ſaying to us, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee: Hide thyſelf as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpaſt. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: The earth alſo ſhall diſcloſe her blood, and ſhall no more cover her ſlain* (z).

(z) Iſa. xxvi. 20, 21.

SERMON III.

Youth reminded of a Judgment to come.

Preached at *Petty-France*, *December* 25, 1728.

ECCLES. XI. 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment.

THE apparent deſign of *Solomon* in this book is to draw out the allurements and enjoyments of this life in their wideſt compaſs, and ſtrongeſt light; and to ſhew how low they ſink, how inſufficient they are to make up a real ſatisfaction worthy of man, or equal to the capacities and appetites he is formed with, how they are interwoven with preſent evils, to take off the edge of our preſent pleaſure in them, and how uſeleſs and unprofitable we ſhall find them, when in another world we ſhall ſurvive them. And his governing view in all this, is to draw off our eager purſuits from all theſe things to what is more excellent in itſelf, and better calculated for our happineſs in the preſent and future world.

world. Hence he begins and ends his theme with this remarkable motto, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity:* and ſums up *the concluſion of the whole matter* (*a*) thus; *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; for God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* (*b*).

According to this turn and view of the whole book, he in the two verſes immediately preceeding our text, ſets out this preſent life, with the comforts of it, as deſirable bleſſings; and yet to ſhew that they are not the moſt deſirable, but that vanity muſt nevertheleſs be written upon them, he repreſents their ſhort period, beyond which we cannot enjoy them, and their laſting conſequent, that great lengths of darkneſs will ſucceed them. And then in our text itſelf, to prevent young peoples rioting upon them, who are moſt likely to abuſe them, he reminds them of the awful account, that muſt be given to GOD, of all their irregular pleaſures in the future judgment.

In the 7th and 8th verſes he ſays, *Truly the light is ſweet*, that is, this preſent life is ſweet; for light is often put for life, and is called *the light of the living*, *Job* xxxiii. 30. and *Pſal.* lvi. 13. It is freely owned, ſays *Solomon*, that life is ſweet, *and a pleaſant thing it is for the eyes to behold the ſun*; objects agreeable to the ſenſes are very delightful. *But if a man live many years*, which few attain to, *and rejoice in them all*, which is the lot of fewer ſtill, for *man is born to trouble, as the ſparks fly upwards* (*c*); ſuppoſe, I ſay, the beſt, that a man ſhould *live many years, and rejoice*, or live comfortably in them all; *yet let him remember the days of darkneſs, for they ſhall be many:* Let him remember that death will come, which *Job* calls *the land of darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death* (*d*), and which the wiſe man here calls *the days of darkneſs*, in oppoſition to the life, which he had ſpoken of under

(*a*) Eccleſ. i. 2. and xii. 8. (*b*) Ibid. 13, 14.
(*c*) Job v. 7. (*d*) Job x. 21, 22.

the notion of light, in the foregoing verſe. Theſe days of darkneſs will be many, they will be more than the days of light. A man's body ſhall lie longer in the earth than he lived upon it; and if he knows no other comforts than this life affords, the blackneſs and darkneſs of hell itſelf ſhall abide with him for ever; hence *all that cometh is vanity:* All that he here is or hath is of little worth, of ſmall and trivial account, of ſhort and uncertain continuance, and will leave him miſerable at laſt.

But leſt young and inconſiderate minds ſhould nevertheleſs take occaſion from what he had ſaid concerning the ſweets and pleaſures of life, fooliſhly to imagine that it would be beſt for them to enjoy and indulge life with unbounded freedom while they have it; or to eat and drink, and be merry, ſince *to morrow they muſt die*; he applies himſelf particularly to them in the words of our text, and carries their view through all theſe things to the future judgment. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,* &c. *But know thou, that for all theſe things, God will bring thee into judgment.*

In the former part of theſe words, he treats the folly of young people in an ironical manner; and in the latter part, he deals more ſeriouſly with them.

1. He treats their folly in an ironical way. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes.* q. d. "Go, "O young man, who canſt taſte nothing but ſen- "ſitive pleaſures, and art eagerly fond of them; "go, indulge, and glut, and ſolace thyſelf in them "to the utmoſt; try what is in them, as far as "thy carnal heart can wiſh; pride thyſelf in thy "ſtrength and beauty, in thy revellings and ban- "quetings, in thy frolics, in thy rakiſh and beauiſh "airs; deny thyſelf nothing that thy fooliſh heart "deſires, or thy wanton eyes behold; pleaſe thy- "ſelf in every thing that offers a gratification to

"thy

" thy ſenſes; be as jolly, careleſs and gay, and as " profuſe and wandring through all the pleaſures of " life, as thou canſt; ſpend the vigor of thy youth " in them: Take this courſe, if thou likeſt it, " and if thou dareſt; ſee what will be the hideous " conſequences."

Such ſort of ironical ſpeeches are very uſual in ſcripture, and in common language among ourſelves, when nothing is leſs intended than what the expreſſions ſeem to allow of. Thus GOD uſed this manner of ſpeech to *Iſrael*, ſaying, *Go and cry unto the gods which ye have choſen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation* (*e*): q. d. " If you are ſo " ſottiſh, as to imagine that the idol gods which " you have choſen can deliver you, let them have " your confidence, and your ſervice, to your own " confuſion." And ſomething like this was the language of CHRIST to his diſciples, when he *ſaid unto them, Sleep on now and take your reſt; behold, the hour is at hand, and the ſon of man is betrayed into the hands of ſinners* (*f*): q. d. " If you think this is a time " to ſleep, when I am betrayed, and you are in- " compaſſed with dangers, take your own courſe." In the firſt of theſe caſes, *Iſrael* were reproved for their idolatry; and in the laſt, the diſciples for their ſloth. So in the common uſe of language, when we would not have one do a thing, we often ſay, Do, let me ſee you do it: Go, live and act like the fool, the fop, or the rake: The plain meaning is, Do it at your peril. While ſuch kind of expreſſions ſeem to give leave, they ſtrongly forbid to do it, and carry a threatning to him that dares venture upon it, that he ſhall find its ſad effects to his coſt, or that he ſhall ſmart ſeverely for it.

And that this is the manner of *Solomon*'s ſpeech, in the former part of our text, appears from the general deſign of this book, which (as has been obſerved) is to ſhew the inſufficiency of all the enjoy-

(*e*) Judg. x. 14. (*f*) Matt. xxvi. 45.

ments of this world to make one happy; and more particularly from the preceeding verſe, where he ſpeaks of the days of darkneſs that ſhould ſucceed and overbalance the pleaſures of life, and pronounces vanity upon them; and from the ſolemn memento he adds, for young peoples reflection, in the cloſe of the verſe: where,

2. He proceeds to deal more ſeriouſly with them; *But know thou, that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment:* q. d. "If you dare "venture upon this courſe of life, I will tell you "what you muſt expect: *For all theſe things*, "for all theſe ſenſualities and ſurfeitings upon the "pleaſures of youth, *God will bring thee into judg-* "*ment*. There certainly muſt be an after-reckoning "for them; they muſt be all called over again at "the tribunal of the holy and all-ſeeing GOD in the "great day of account; and there, unleſs thou art "reclaimed from them, they muſt receive their juſt "and dreadful reward. Let but this be ſeriouſly "conſidered, and laid to heart, and then ſee whe- "ther thou canſt dare to indulge thy irregular appe- "tites, *to rejoice in the days of thy youth*, and to *walk* "*in the ways of thy heart, and in the ſight of thine* "*eyes*; or whether thou muſt not think it beſt for "thee to *remember all the commandments of the Lord,* "*and do them*; *and not to ſeek after thine own heart,* "*and thine own eyes, after which thou uſedſt to go a* "*whoring* (*g*); thou wilt then have other thoughts "of the matter than now thou haſt, or than thou "wilt have, while thy conſcience hath no regard to "a judgment to come."

I would, by divine aſſiſtance, diſcourſe on the following obſervation from theſe words, *viz.*

Obſerv. That a ſerious conſideration of the awful judgment to come is of great uſe, by the bleſſing of GOD, to damp and reſtrain the ſinful pleaſures and ſenſual vanities of youth.

Days

(*g*) Numb. xv. 39.

Days of youth are, ordinarily, days of the greateſt vanity: The temper of young peoples minds is apt to be too light, and gay, and frolicſome, and the general courſe of their lives to run into an exceſs of mirth and pleaſure, or into ſome criminal diverſions, which they falſly call by the name of innocent paſtimes.

Vain and defiling company, the pride of dreſs and of every new extravagant mode, merriment and jollity, cards and dice, intemperance, luxury, drunkenneſs, and debaucheries, too often waſte their precious time: They give themſelves up to theſe, or to ſome of theſe, as if their natures were formed for no higher ends, and were capable of no other happineſs; and as if they were to periſh with the brute.

But this their way is their folly: Madneſs and atheiſm are in it; and ſo many of them will one day think, when, alas! it will be too late to redreſs it. And were they now but ſeriouſly to conſider this evident truth; that they are accountable creatures, and muſt in a little time ſtand before God, to be judged for all their preſent careleſſneſs, vanity and exceſs, it would make their blood run cold in their veins; it would check the pleaſure of their guilty turn of life, and they could not dare to indulge themſelves ſo freely in it as they do.

Therefore in farther ſpeaking to the point before us, I ſhall only lead you to ſome conſiderations of the judgment to come, that, by the bleſſing of God, may be of uſe to damp and reſtrain the ſinful pleaſures and ſenſual vanities of youth; and ſhut up the diſcourſe with two inferences for improvement.

The conſiderations I would propoſe to your ſerious attention and reflection, are ſuch as theſe.

Firſt, The judgment to come is certain, and cannot be avoided.

It is not a cunningly deviſed fable, but the greateſt reality; its being future makes it not the leſs certain,

for the whole world, and all things in it, once were so. It will be as certainly present in its season, as the present moment now is, which was future till now. That *God will bring thee to judgment*, is a truth as certain, as that thou hast a being; as certain, as that GOD himself is.

The very heathens had some notices of it; and the consciences of mankind in general forespeak it, by the consternation, terrors, sinkings, and remorse that seize them, either under sudden surprizes and apprehensions of immediate danger and death, or under a sense of guilt, which none is privy to but GOD and themselves. The principles of right reason assure us of this judgment by a great variety of arguings, and particularly from a consideration of the unequal lots of the righteous and wicked in this world, where the righteous are frequently afflicted, destitute and oppressed; while the wicked, who are monsters of human nature, many times flourish like the bay-tree, are the rich, the mighty, and the honored in the earth. Reason itself will tell us, that the infinite wisdom, goodness and righteousness of the great GOD and Governor of the world, would never suffer it to be thus, if there were not to be a day of reckoning hereafter to set all these seeming incongruities to-rights, when the righteous shall be comforted, and the wicked tormented, as *Abraham* said to the rich man in *Luke* xvi. 25. It was only the thought of this that could satisfy the mind of the *Psalmist*, when he was perplexed about these seemingly unequal ways of providence, as you may see in *Psal.* lxxiii. throughout.

And the scriptures of truth clearly and fully confirm the certainty of the future judgment. *Daniel*, in the visions of the Almighty, *beheld till the thrones* of princes *were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit — his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministred to him, and ten thousand*

thousand times ten thousand stood before him: The judgment was set, and the books were opened (*h*). And in the New Testament we are assured, *That every one of us must give an account of himself to God*; and that *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad* (*i*). The Apostle *Peter* says, *The heavens and the earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men* (*k*). And the Apostle *Jude*, pronouncing woes to the wicked of those days, says, Enoch *also, the seventh from* Adam, *prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him* (*l*). Testimonies of this kind are almost numberless; and many others might be added, too clear and strong to be evaded by any that own the divine authority of the scriptures.

He that lives in sin and pleasure here, must come into judgment for it hereafter; rocks and mountains cannot hide him, no power on earth can shelter or detain him: he must be haled forth to judgment whether he will or no. God himself, the great omnipotent God, hath undertaken the matter; and who can get out of his reach, or escape his hand? There is no flying from him, no resistance to be made against him.

O think of this in the midst of all your sensual pleasures and unguarded liberties; when you are drinking the drunkard's cup, or are at your games and frolics, mispending your time, and abusing yourselves; remember that *for all these, God will* inevitably *bring you into judgment*; and as you think you

(*h*) Dan. vii. 9, 10. (*i*) Rom. xiv. 12. 2 Cor. v. 10.
(*k*) 2 Pet. iii. 7. (*l*) Jude 14, 15.

you ſhall like them then, ſo have to do with them now. Hence,

Secondly, The judgment to come is a juſt, ſtrict, and impartial judgment.

He that ſits upon the throne is ſtrictly righteous, and will prove himſelf to be ſo in all the proceedings of his judgment: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right* (*m*)? The juſtice of GOD requires full ſatisfaction for ſin: It is his natural and declared right to be ſatisfied for it, and he will not part with that right. Hence, in the midſt of the freeſt proclamations of his endearing, rich and ſovereign grace, that multiplies pardons, he ſolemnly declares, that *he will by no means clear the guilty* (*n*): There is no room for mercy and grace to take place upon the ſinner till juſtice is ſatisfied for his ſin.

CHRIST has made ſatisfaction to the utmoſt for his people, for all that believe in his name and come unto GOD by him; he has obeyed the law and ſuffered its curſe in their room and ſtead: He thereby wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlaſting righteouſneſs for them, which is imputed, or made over to them for righteouſneſs, through faith in him. *It is unto all, and upon all them that believe*; *for there is no difference* (*o*): Their ſins are thereby pardoned, their perſons are thereby juſtified, and they ſhall be thereby, or on its account, openly acquitted in judgment at the laſt day: They ſhall then be pronounced before the whole world to be righteous perſons, or perſons to whoſe account that righteouſneſs of CHRIST is placed, by which he ſatisfied the law and juſtice for them; for *by the obedience of one* (JESUS CHRIST) *ſhall many be made righteous*; and *Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believes* (*p*). Their preſent pardon and juſtification by CHRIST in this world ſhall be publicly recognized and owned at

(*m*) Gen. xviii. 25. (*n*) Exod. xxxiv. 7.
(*o*) Rom. iii. 22. (*p*) Rom. v. 19. and x. 4.

at the laſt day. Hence the Apoſtle *Peter* called upon the *Jews* to *repent and be converted* to CHRIST, by believing in him whom they had crucified, *that their ſins might be blotted out, when the times of refreſhing ſhould come from the preſence of the Lord, at the reſtitution of all things* (*q*). And the Apoſtle *John*, carrying his thoughts to the final judgment, ſays to believers, *Now, little children, abide in him, that when he ſhall appear, we may have confidence, and not be aſhamed before him at his coming* (*r*).

But as for unbelievers, that lie out from CHRIST and his righteouſneſs, that are impenitent and unyielding to him, that go on in ſin, and live in ſenſual pleaſures, and ſhall be found ſuch at laſt, they muſt ſtand upon their own bottom and anſwer for themſelves, and the judgment of GOD againſt them will be according to truth; there will be no mercy for them, juſtice will ſearch, and try, and condemn them, and ſatisfy itſelf upon them to the utmoſt.

CHRIST, who now ſpeaks to you with all the ſweetneſs and endearments of a kind, compaſſionate and tender Savior, will then be your ſtrict and dreadful Judge, and will ſeverely avenge upon you all the ſlights you now put upon his authority and grace, and upon all the holy warnings and counſels he now ſends to drive, or to draw you off from the ways of ſin. For *the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, and hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance to all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead* (*s*). The heart of this man, CHRIST JESUS, is now full of mercy to ſinners, and his arms are widely extended to embrace every one that *comes unto him*; aſſuring them, that *he will in no wiſe caſt them out* (*t*). But when he comes to judge the world it will be *in righte-*

(*q*) Acts iii. 19, 21. (*r*) 1 John ii 28.
(*s*) Acts xvii. 31. (*t*) John vi. 37.

righteouſneſs; he will know no mercy then to them that reject him now.

His judgment will be ſtrict and impartial, with regard to perſons. Greater and leſſer ſinners, high and low, young and old, male and female, muſt ſtand before him; all nations, kindred and people, muſt be arraigned at his bar; he will excuſe none, he will flatter none, he will pervert judgment for none; there will be no reſpect of perſons with him to induce him to deal falſly in judgment with them; but as their ſtate and character ſhall be, ſo ſentence ſhall paſs upon them. He is above all bribes, nothing can corrupt him; and they that ſwell and make an awful figure in the eyes of men, yea, the greateſt monarchs upon earth, are as low and little before Him, and as unable to ſhake His courage and reſolution, as the meaneſt beggar on the dunghill.

He will be ſtrict and impartial with regard to cauſes. All you have done ſhall be revived and brought to light again: All the actions of your lives, all the things you have been doing in the body here, muſt be accounted for there: All the ſinful, profane, unprofitable words of your lips ſhall be examined into and called over again: *Every idle word that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give account thereof in the day of judgment* (*u*): Yea, all the ſecret thoughts of your hearts, all your inward principles, motives, diſpoſitions and deſigns, which none but God and your own ſouls knew of, and all the wickedneſs you have privately ſpoken, or acted in a corner, ſhall be brought to light, and judged in that day; *For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* (*x*); and in that day, *God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt* (*y*). The things that you have quite forgot and never thought to hear of again, ſhall then be

(*u*) Matt. xii. 36. (*x*) Eccleſ. xii. 14.
(*y*) Rom. ii. 16.

be revived, and the things you thought to conceal shall be brought to open view before all the world. *He will then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. For all these things God will bring thee to judgment* (*z*).

And he will be strict and impartial in the sentence or judgment he will pass upon persons and their causes; for he will judge them according to their works. Thus the Apostle *John*, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, *saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works: And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works* (*a*). The books will be opened for trial and judgment; the book of providence, the book of the law, the book of the gospel, the book of every man's conscience, and the book of God's omniscience; and another book to be opened is the book of life, in which God hath enrolled the names of the heirs of glory, as *they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love* (*b*), and as they were given to Christ, to redeem and save them. Hence it is spoken of as *the book of life*, in which their *names were written from the foundation of the world* (*c*), and it is called the *Lamb's book of life*. The other books, according to these human forms of speech, may be considered as registers of things, with reference to this original book; and as they prove or disprove our calling, and exhibit proofs and evidences that our names were or were not written in that book, so the judgment will proceed for or against us: For *whoever shall not be found written in the book of life, shall be cast into*

(*z*) 1 Cor. iv. 5.
(*a*) Rev. xx. 12, 13.
(*b*) Eph. i. 4.
(*c*) Rev. xvii. 8. and xiii. 8.

into the fire; *and none* ſhall be admitted to heaven *but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life* (*d*). Out of the things written in theſe books, the laſt judgment will paſs upon every one of us, and that with a proper regard to every one's works.

The righteous will indeed be adjudged to eternal life, as the gift of GOD's free grace; for they will *find mercy in that day* (*e*), even that mercy which they had been *looking for, to eternal life* (*f*). It is *grace, that is to be brought to them at the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt* (*g*), even grace to the *blotting out of their ſins at that time of refreſhing from the preſence of the Lord. Their names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world* (*h*); and anſwerable thereunto they will be adjudged to the *kingdom, which the Father, of his good pleaſure, gave to them* (*i*), *and prepared for them, from the foundation of the world* (*k*); all this is the work and language of abſolute and unmixed grace, maintaining the grandeur of its freedom and ſovereignty to the end. Accordingly, the loudeſt praiſes of grace will eternally eccho through the triumphing ſongs of the bleſſed above: They will turn off all worthineſs from themſelves *to the Lamb that was ſlain, ſaying, Bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and power unto him that ſitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever* (*l*); and who can think that the doxology will ever ceaſe there, *To him that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood, and made us kings and prieſts to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen* (*m*)?

But notwithſtanding all this, they will be adjudged to eternal life in a way of righteouſneſs, on CHRIST's account; and with impartial judgment according to rule and evidence. CHRIST's ſentence in their favor will be according to his word, and according

(*d*) Rev. xx. 15. and xxi. 27. (*e*) 2 Tim. i. 18.
(*f*) Jude 21. (*g*) 1 Pet. i. 13. (*h*) Acts iii. 19.
(*i*) Luke xii. 32. (*k*) Matt. xxv. 34. (*l*) Rev. v. 12, 13.
(*m*) Rev. i. 5, 6.

cording to evident proofs, that a gracious ſentence of life belongs to them. Hence the grace of the Judge will take notice of, and kindly own all their good *works of labor and love.* He will give them their proper weight in judgment, as they are the effects and tokens of GOD's ſpecial love to them, and grace upon them, and as they will be fair proofs and evidences, according to GOD's word, of his eternal election of them, of their redemption and pardon by the blood of CHRIST, of their effectual faith in him, of their vital union with him, and ſaving intereſt in him, and of that true ſanctification and holineſs, without which the rule of judgment declares *no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

And CHRIST will crown all theſe works of righteouſneſs with a reward of grace, according to the degrees of their eminence for the honor of his name, and in a correſpondence to the grace whereby he enabled them to perform them; and ſo it will be only grace crowning grace, according to its own rule of proceedure; or grace putting an anſwerable and proportionate glory upon its own work that led the way to it, and in its richeſt overflowings prepared them for it. Hence we never read of the righteous being rewarded at the laſt day for their works, as if they deſerved the reward; but the conſtant language of ſcripture repreſents it to be according to their works, or anſwerable to the kinds and degrees of their works, by which their ſtate and characters are evidently diſtinguiſhed to be of GOD. They are bleſſed when they die, becauſe they *die in the Lord*; that is the foundation of their bleſſedneſs. *And their works follow them* (*n*), to witneſs for them at GOD's bar; but do not go before them, to be the cauſe or ground of their acceptance and reward there; this lies intirely in CHRIST and grace.

But on the other hand, ſtrict juſtice will take notice of all the ſins of chriſtleſs impenitent ſinners, to bring

(*n*) Rev. xiv. 13.

bring them into judgment for them; and it will reward them for, as well as according to their works. CHRIST will undeniably prove by their works that they had no true effectual faith in him, and can claim no interest in him; he will arraign them for their numberless transgressions, and expose them to open view in all their multiplied aggravations; he will take off all the thin pretences with which they here covered or excused them; he will condemn them for them, and pour out his fiery indignation upon them as their just reward, and that in proportion to the multitude and aggravations of their sins. Hence he said to his Apostles, *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words; when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of* Sodom *and* Gomorrah *in the day of judgment than for that city* (*o*).

O think of this, you that neglect the things of your everlasting peace, that go on in sin, and are resolved upon the pursuit of youthful sensual pleasures. You must hear of them again, when you would be glad to forget them; and if you die in your sins, you must appear at the day of judgment in your sins, and must bear your own burden when there will be none to help you. If *Job* cried out in the distress of his spirit, *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth* (*p*): How pungent will your agonies be, when all your sins shall be revived in your consciences, and set in order before you, and the wrath due to them shall roll in fiery streams upon you? Then all your present delights will be turned into gall and wormwood, your laughter into mourning, and your joy into insupportable heaviness. *These things*, says GOD, *hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now*

(*o*) Matt. x. 14, 15. (*p*) Job xiii. 26.

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver (*q*). Hence,

Thirdly, The consequences of that judgment are most important and eternal.

They are either life, or death; unutterable joy and blessedness, or unutterable agonies and misery; and that not for a year, an age, or but a few ages, but for ever and ever. *Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal* (*r*).

When judgment shall pass against you for those youthful pleasures and sinful vanities, which you are now so fond of, it will dispatch you away to outer darkness, void of all comfort and full of all hideous horrors and exquisite torments; and there is no appeal from that judgment; it is the supreme judicature, and its sentence can never be reversed: It will banish you from the delightful presence of God and Christ, of blessed saints and angels for ever; and you will be punished with as great a destruction as almighty vengeance itself shall inflict upon you. *For the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* (*s*).

The fire prepared for the devil and his angels shall kindle upon you; yea, those direful wretches shall be your company and torment too; they shall be an additional hell without, and your own guilty con-

(*q*) Psal. l. 21, 22. (*r*) Matt. xxv. 34, 41, 46.
(*s*) 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.

ſciences full of horrid ſevere reflections, ſhall be a hell within you; they will perpetually gnaw you within, like a *worm that never dies*; and all the complicated vengeance of that doleful ſtate will be like a raging *fire*, *that never is quenched* (*t*).

How pleaſing ſoever you may think the ways of ſin now; yet is it worth your while to indulge yourſelves in them to your eternal perdition? All the paths you tread take hold on hell, and every ſtep you take in them brings you nearer to it: and can you think a little vain frothy pleaſure is of more worth than a glorious heaven; or is worth having, at the dear expenſe of endleſs wailings and gnaſhings of teeth? O fooliſh ſelf-deluding and ſelf-deſtroying ſinner, *What ſhall it profit thee if thou gain the whole world and loſe thy own ſoul? Or what wouldſt thou*, one day, *give in exchange for thy ſoul* (*u*)? Once more,

Fourthly, This awful judgment will quickly come. You may put the evil day far from your thoughts, or look upon it as at a vaſt diſtance; but it will quickly overtake you, and may come upon you before you are aware. *The* ſecond *coming of the Lord draws nigh*, *the Judge ſtands at the door*; and the ſigns of the laſt days are upon us. And how ſoon the very laſt may come, GOD only knows.

But whether the ſolemn day of the general judgment ſhall open in the time of your lives upon earth or no; yet, this is certain, that the day of your death cannot be a great way off; and as ſoon as that comes, a particular private judgment will paſs upon you, and unalterably fix you in a ſtate of inexpreſſible happineſs or miſery, to be reſerved therein againſt the day of the general formal judgment of men and devils. Hence the wiſe man ſays of the day of our death, *Then ſhall the duſt return to the earth as it was: and the ſpirit ſhall return unto God who*

(*t*) Mark ix. 44. (*u*) Matt. xvi. 26.

who gave it (*x*). It shall return to him to receive its happy or doleful allotments from him; and to have some notices, in a way unknown to us, of its everlasting abode, and of what it must be, together with the body, for ever.

Now, the day of thy death, and the particular judgment immediately consequent upon it, is very near: It may be before thou thinkest of it, it may be before another day, another hour, or another moment. Hast thou never heard of the surprising sudden deaths of others? What is there in the make of thy constitution to warrant thee against the like surprize? Thy youth, thy strength, vigor and health are no security against it: The flower of thy days may be cut down before it come to its withering age. An apoplexy, a fever, or other malignant distempers may soon consume thy beauty, and crush thee as the moth: A fall, a quarrel, a drinking, or a merry bout, a hand of violence from wicked men, a hand of vengeance from the holy God, or some among the thousands of unknown providences round about us, may knock thee down in thy full strength, and send thee away to judgment without warning. And what a dismal case would it be for thee, to be thus sent immediately thither in thy sins!

But suppose, what none can be sure of, that your days should reach the utmost age of man, before the shadows of the evening stretch out upon you; yet what is the age of man now, compared with what it was before the flood? And the utmost length of those days, yea, of the whole duration of this world, bears no proportion to the eternity that follows death and judgment. But as for your days, take them at the longest, they are but as a span's breadth, and they swiftly fly through that short space like a weaver's shuttle; they are but as a vapor that is blown away, and vanisheth almost as soon as it appears: They are but as a point in infinite space, as a moment in

(*x*) Eccles. xii. 7.

infinite duration, and as a unit at the beginning of endleſs figures,

If you could always keep your preſent pleaſures, and never be called to a cloſe and diſmal account for them, you might have ſomething to plead in their favor: But the days of death and judgment haſten apace, and are drawing toward you as faſt as you ſpend time in thoſe indulgences. They will quickly, very quickly, make an arreſt upon you, and ſpoil all your ſport. There will then be an eternal entire end of all your ſinful pleaſing vanities; but not an end, happy would it be for you if there were, of your bitter remembrances of them; of your ſtinging reflections upon them, and of your overwhelming ſufferings for them; theſe will ſtick cloſe by you, and abide for ever with you. The dreadful wages are juſt ready to be paid; the cup of trembling and aſtoniſhment is juſt ready to be put into your hands, inſtead of the cup of intoxicating liquor and poiſonous mirth, which now you greedily drink. What a touching view doth *Job* give us of this caſe of the wicked? *They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the ſound of the organ. They ſpend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? and how oft cometh their deſtruction upon them? God diſtributeth ſorrows in his anger. They are as ſtubble before the wind, and as chaff that the ſtorm carrieth away. His eyes ſhall ſee his deſtruction, and he ſhall drink of the wrath of the Almighty* (*y*). A ſudden doleful end of all their heedleſs jollity! See more to the ſame purpoſe in that chapter.

Thus we have gone through ſome of the many conſiderations of the judgment to come, that may be of uſe to reſtrain and damp the ſinful pleaſures of youth; the LORD grant they may be ſo to you. What has been ſaid of youth, may be moſtly applied to other ages; and ſinners in every ſtage of life

(*y*) Job xxi. 12, 13, 17, 18, 20.

life ſhould take it to themſelves. And ſure I am, that if it were duly conſidered, and cloſely laid to heart, ſin would appear more formidable, ſenſual pleaſures would taſte more inſipid or rather nauſeous, and the careleſs frolicſome youths of the day would not dare to live at ſo looſe and heedleſs a rate as they do.

Give me leave to improve what has been ſaid under two inferences. And the firſt ſhall be this:

Infer. I. That there are but few, who ſeriouſly conſider and heartily believe the judgment to come.

It is a truth generally owned, but little thought of, or really believed. The evidences for it are ſo ſtrong and uncontrolable, and its concernments are ſo awful and ſolemn, that mankind (except a few abandoned wretches) cannot, dare not deny it. And yet it is treated as if it were all romance and fable, or as if it related only to another ſpecies of creatures, and not to men, or not to ourſelves in particular; and few there are that lay it to heart.

There is a practical reigning atheiſm in man's heart, that riſeth up in rebellion againſt the notions of his head. He profeſſeth to believe, and thinks he doth believe a judgment to come: but he believes it like a dream, and thinks of it as if it never would come, or as if he himſelf ſhould not be concerned in it. He does not deliberate upon it with awful ſeriouſneſs, nor believe it with a hearty concern about the part himſelf ſhall have in it; nor doth he care to have his thoughts employed about it, or impreſſed with fixed and ſtrong expectations of it.

What mean the ſin and vanity that abound in the world; the pride and luxury of ſome, and the profane curſing, ſwearing, drunkenneſs, and debauchery of others? What is the language of the looſe and airy converſation, the indecent talk, the frolics and extravagancies, the gaming and miſpent time of others; and the treachery and unfaithfulneſs, the fraud and ly-

ing, the covetousness and oppression, the rage and violence, malice and revenge of others? And what is the voice of all that neglect and contempt of GOD and religion; of all that opposition to his truths, ways, worship, sabbaths, and ordinances; and of all that ridicule and banter of sacred things, that this degenerate age runs into, pleases and prides itself in? What is the meaning of all these, and numberless other criminal practices and neglects, which every place is filled with? Do they not plainly speak out this inward atheism of mens hearts, and their great disregard to the future judgment? They are ashamed to own it with their lips, but they proclaim it aloud in their lives. Where is the sense of this course of life? or who could dare to venture on these things, if a clear view and firm belief of the awful judgment and its consequences had taken possession of their hearts?

And do not the great degeneracies, remissness, and unguarded liberties of many professors of CHRIST and religion; the intemperate heats and unchristian reproaches of some, and the indolence and lukewarmness of others; do not these too manifestly shew that even they are too little conversant with, and too little live in the serious meditation and faith of these great and solemn realities?

Behold the horrible depravity of human nature in our world! How monstrously vitiated, and how low is it sunk by the fall, that things so absolutely certain, so vastly important, and so generally owned to be such, should make so little impression upon the greatest part of those that must be concerned in them, and should have no more influence even on the best of us all! What cause have we to be deeply humbled before GOD, to be daily on our watch, and to be fervent in prayer against the dangerous and deceitful workings of in-dwelling sin! And what need have we of almighty efficacious grace to begin and perfect the cure of this malignant distemper of our natures,

natures, and to set these concerning truths with prevailing power upon our hearts!

Are any of you under some present serious impressions from them? have any of your souls, like *Felix*, trembled under these *reasonings about righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come* (*y*)? O take heed of stifling these awakenings, of drowning them in company and pleasures again, or of putting them off, as *Felix* did, for what you may think a more convenient season. A season so convenient as this may never offer more: and if this passeth off without some good effect, your present fears may hereafter justly come upon you when there will be no possibility of escape. It is dangerous delaying in an affair of such infinite moment, while there is but a step between you and the eternal judgment. This leads to the second inference, and that is,

Infer. II. That it most nearly concerns us to be prepared for the judgment to come.

This is a matter of the highest and last importance, our eternal happiness depends upon it. Are we all bound to appear ere long before GOD in judgment, whether we will or no? and shall we take no thought beforehand about it? Shall we have no concern, no care about our own decisive trial for eternity; about the state and issues of our cause in that grand assize, whether we shall stand or fall, be absolved or cast at the bar of GOD? O! how dreadful will it be to be found speechless there, to have our mouths stopt with conscious guilt, to behold the resenting frowns of the angry Judge, to be convicted and condemned to eternal torments, to be banished with a curse from the presence of GOD, and to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! Who can rate or conceive the consternation, the agonizing dolors of such a piercing sentence and just recompense of reward?

(*y*) Acts xxiv. 25.

But O how unutterably bleſſed will it be to have boldneſs in the day of judgment! to appear there with joy, and not with grief; to find our Judge our friend; to ſee the enlivening ſmiles of his lovely countenance; to have his perfect righteouſneſs interpoſed between vindictive juſtice and us; to hear him recommending us to the Father as his favorites, that were given to him, and redeemed by him, that are waſhed in his blood, and ſanctified by his Spirit; to receive the abſolving ſentence from his gracious lips; to be welcomed to the kingdom of his and our Father; and to be ſurrounded with glittering crowds of attending angels to uſher us into the glorious preſence of the bleſſed GOD, *where is fulneſs of joy*; and to lodge us amidſt the honors of his *right hand*, where *are pleaſures for evermore* (z)! O! the extaſy and tranſport, the joy and praiſe, the acclamations and triumphs of that deciſory crowning day!

Surely it cannot but be a matter of the utmoſt conſequence to us, that we be prepared for a final judgment, of ſuch vaſtly contrary events; that the darkneſs of its horrors may not ſpread upon us; that our hearts may not ake with trembling, and our faces gather paleneſs there: but that the brightneſs of its delights may ſhine upon us; that our hearts may leap for joy, and our countenances ſparkle with holy rapture; that we may be delivered from all the confuſion of the wicked, and may ſtand with the righteous in judgment.

Here is a cauſe every way worthy of all the attention and care we are capable of, that it may not miſcarry at laſt. Our eternal all is concerned in it; and methinks it ſhould in a manner engroſs all our thoughts, till we find it in a promiſing way, and in a ſafe courſe for a happy deciſion at GOD's tribunal. While we are in ſuſpence about it, we ſhould be often trying it over and over again, beforehand, as in the ſight of GOD, at the bar of our own conſciences:

We

(z) Pſalm xvi. 11.

We ſhould try it there, to ſee how things ſtand between GOD and us, and how they are like to go in judgment; to obſerve where our danger and our hope lie, what is amiſs to be rectified, and what is right to be purſued and improved; and to engage us now, while we are in the way, to ſeek GOD's favor with our whole hearts, that we at laſt may *behold his face in righteouſneſs, and be ſatisfied with his likeneſs* (*a*).

If any of you ſee yourſelves in danger of the judgment, and want to know what is neceſſary in order to your ſafe and comfortable appearance there, I would anſwer, two things; and they are faith in CHRIST, and the new birth.

1. Thou muſt have faith in CHRIST, for a righteouſneſs to appear in at the bar of GOD; or thou canſt not ſtand with comfort there.

Thou muſt have a perfect righteouſneſs to appear in; or thou wilt be in perfect confuſion before him *that will judge the world in righteouſneſs*. Thou muſt have a righteouſneſs that will anſwer every charge of the law and juſtice againſt thee; or thou wilt ſink under the charge; a righteouſneſs that will anſwer for all thy ſins; or elſe thou canſt not be held guiltleſs. The judgment thou art to appear in is a righteous judgment, a judgment according to truth; and unleſs thou haſt a righteouſneſs to plead, as ſinleſs and ſpotleſs as the great Judge demands, thou wilt be ſpeechleſs, and he will proceed againſt thee, and paſs the condemning ſentence upon thee.

Now, no righteouſneſs of thy own can be ſufficient to anſwer the demands of his juſtice; for thoſe demands are ſet out in his law, which requires perfect obedience, and curſes for every ſin, ſaying, *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them* (*b*). Hence the Apoſtle concluded, that *by the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight* (*c*). And the man

(*a*) Pſalm xvii. 15. (*b*) Gal. iii. 10.
(*c*) Rom. iii. 20.

man after GOD's own heart had the same sense of things, when he said, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified* (*d*).

But CHRIST hath wrought out a perfect righteousness, in the room and stead of sinners, by his active and passive obedience to that law which they have broken. This is a righteousness which justice has accepted, and will accept in judgment. This is proposed in the Gospel to sinners for their acceptance; and GOD's appointed way of making this over to them is by faith in him: For as *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes*; so *with the heart man believes unto righteousness* (*e*).

If thou therefore, as a guilty hell-deserving wretch, as a law-condemned and self-condemned sinner, appealest in the distress of thy soul to the righteousness of CHRIST to answer for thee; if thou makest it thy only plea and refuge, receivest it by faith, puttest thy hearty trust in it, and willingly yieldest up thyself to it, the Gospel-constitution makes it thine. Thou having the faith of the operation of GOD, and thereby *receiving the gift of* this *righteousness* (*f*), it is made over to *constitute thee righteous* (*g*). It is placed to thy account, that thou mayst be accepted of GOD in this world, and acquitted at the bar of judgment in the next. For *they that receive the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ* (*h*). Hence was the Apostle's desire to *be found* at last *in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith* (*i*). So that, if thou art found in CHRIST, interested in his righteousness by faith, thou wilt appear with safety and comfort at his bar; otherwise thou wilt be found speechless there. Venture there without it, who will for me; I dare

(*d*) Psalm cxliii. 2. (*e*) Rom. x. 4, 10. (*f*) Rom. v. 17. (*g*) Διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί. Rom. v. 19. (*h*) Ibid. ver. 17. (*i*) Phil. iii. 9.

dare not think of appearing at ſuch a tribunal but in the Redeemer's righteouſneſs.

2. Thou muſt be born again.

Thy nature muſt be renewed and ſanctified by heart-changing purifying grace, together with thy believing in CHRIST for all acceptance with GOD in him. Thou muſt have *repentance toward God*, as well as *faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (*k*). The temper of thy heart, and the way and courſe of thy life muſt be turned from ſin to holineſs; or thou canſt not ſee GOD's face with comfort. *Verily, verily*, ſays CHRIST, *except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God* (*l*). We are to *follow peace with all men, and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord* (*m*). For *the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in judgment, nor ſinners in the congregation of the righteous* (*n*).

Though regeneration and holineſs are not the price of our diſcharge in judgment, yet they are the mark and inſcription that are found on all thoſe that ſhall be diſcharged there. We may think we ſhall then hear CHRIST inquiring concerning us, as he did about the tribute-money that was ſhewn him, *whoſe image and ſuperſcription hath it?* And according as it ſhall be found to be the image of GOD, or of the devil, he will ſay, *Render to God the things which be God's; and render to the* devil *the things which be the* devil's (*o*).

If CHRIST do not ſee his mark, his image, his inſcription of renewing ſanctifying grace upon thee, he will not own thee for one of his; he will not judge thee fit for heaven, nor adjudge thee to it; but will order thee to *depart from him*, as *a worker of iniquity*, ſaying, *I know thee not*; and whatever thy pretences are, *I never knew thee* (*p*).

If therefore thou wouldſt ſtand with ſafety and comfort in the day of judgment, take heed of reſting ſhort

(*k*) Acts xx. 21. (*l*) John iii. 3.
(*m*) Heb. xii. 14. (*n*) Pſal i. 5.
(*o*) Luke xx. 24, 25. (*p*) Luke xiii. 27. and Matt. vii. 23.

ſhort of CHRIST, or of taking up with any faith in him that doth not make thee conformable to him. See that thou *believe with the heart unto righteouſneſs* (*q*), that thy *faith work by love* (*r*), and *purify thy heart* (*s*); and that thou be enabled to live and act with a governing view and conſcientious reference to the future judgment. Give the LORD no reſt till he hath wrought theſe neceſſary things in thee and for thee, in the way, and by the means of his own appointment. Attend upon him with all diligence in the uſe of thoſe means, and with a dependence on his grace, be *looking for his mercy to eternal life* (*t*): And in the ſtrength of that grace, *labor, that whether preſent or abſent, thou mayſt be accepted of him* (*u*); and that at laſt thou mayſt be found, *not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the ſaving of the ſoul* (*x*).

(*q*) Rom. x. 10. (*r*) Gal. v. 6. (*s*) Acts xv. 9.
(*t*) Jude 21. (*u*) 2 Cor. v. 9. (*x*) Heb. x. 39.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Youth's Obſtructions in their Way to CHRIST and Eternal Life.

Preached at *Little St Hellen's, May* 1, 1728.

MATT. XIX. 22.

But when the young man heard that ſaying, he went away ſorrowful, for he had great poſſeſſions.

A Future ſtate of glory and bleſſedneſs, compriſed in the ſcripture notion of eternal life, is ſo excellent in itſelf, and ſo ſuitable to the nature, ſentiments, and appetites of a rational and immortal ſoul, that every one, who ſoberly thinks about it, may ſee abundant reaſon to be deſirous of it. And yet, through the ſinful diſorder of human nature in its preſent fallen ſtate; ſuch are its ſtrong attachments to this world, and ſuch its contrariety to GOD, as fling inſuperable difficulties in the way of our purſuits after it, and diſpoſe us to prefer objects of a depraved reliſh before it, till the grace of GOD alters the biaſs of our hearts.

To ſubſerve the deſign of this grace, different methods are taken in ſcripture to remove the diffe-

rent

rent obſtacles that lie in the way of inquirers after eternal life.

If conſcience is awakened to an affecting ſenſe of ſin, and obnoxiouſneſs to divine wrath; and its ſelf-diffident inquiry is, *What muſt I do to be ſaved (a)?* The way of faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST is opened before it; and a proper anſwer to ſuch an inquirer is, like that of the Apoſtle *Paul* to the jailor in circumſtances of that kind, *Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved (b)*. But if a man is full of himſelf, and determined to ſeek righteouſneſs to eternal life by his own doings, doating upon his own ſufficiency to obtain it; and his ſelf-dependent inquiry is, *What good thing ſhall I do that I may have eternal life?* The way of works is ſhut up againſt him; and a proper anſwer to ſuch an inquirer lies in ſhewing him, that all his own doings are too defective to recommend him to the favor of GOD, and thereby bringing him to the knowledge of himſelf, as a leading ſtep to the knowledge of CHRIST, and of the way to eternal life through him.

This I take to be the caſe of the young man mentioned in our text, and the tendency of CHRIST's anſwers to him. He had learnt the doctrine of merit from the ſelf-juſticiary ſcribes and phariſees, and addreſſes CHRIST in their language, only with more honorable ſentiments of him, as a teacher ſent of GOD, than they generally had. Accordingly he ſalutes him under the title of *good Maſter*, and ſuppoſing him capable of laying out the proper conditions of life, ſays unto him, *What good thing ſhall I do, that I may have eternal Life (c)?* In anſwer to this, CHRIST ſaid unto him, *Why calleſt thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God: But, if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (d)*.

This anſwer is accommodated to the apprehenſions that the young man had both of CHRIST, and of

(*a*) Acts xvi. 30. (*b*) Ibid. 31. (*c*) Matt. xix. 16.
(*d*) Ibid. 17.

of the way of obtaining eternal life. CHRIST's view therein was neither to adjust his own character, who at other times asserted himself to be *good*, saying, *I am the good shepherd*; and allowed *Thomas*, in an address to himself, to call him, *his Lord, and his God* (*e*): Nor did he intend, by this answer, to open the real way, in which a sinful creature may obtain eternal life, which at other times he declared to be alone by himself, through faith in him. But, I think, his apparent design was to rebuke the pride of the Rabbies of that day, and the young man for encouraging it; and to convince him and them of the impossibility of that way of life, which he and they were so fond of.

Hence, in answer to his salutation under the title of *good Master*, CHRIST tells him that, since he took him to be only a man, it was an insufferable piece of flattery to apply the title of *good* to him; not in the vulgar acceptation of the word, but as a token of religious respect, which belongs to GOD only. This was levelled in a way of rebuke, at the shameless pride of the Rabbies, and at the encouragement, that was usually given to it, by accosting them in a religious manner with swelling and idolatrous titles, too high for mortal men. And in answer to the question, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* CHRIST tells him, that if he is for getting heaven, or *entering into life*, by his own doings, he must *keep the commandments*; a perfect obedience to which, is the only tenure of eternal life to him that would earn it.

The young man flattering himself that he could easily do this, according to the loose notions he had received from the scribes and pharisees about the meaning of the commandments, pertly saith unto him, *Which* (*f*)*?* And that CHRIST might take an opportunity to convince him of his defects, even in the lower duties of the second table, he only instances in

(*e*) John x. 11. xx. 28. (*f*) Ibid. 18.

in them, ſaying, *Thou ſhalt do no murder. Thou ſhalt not commit adultery. Thou ſhalt not ſteal. Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs. Honor thy father and thy mother. And thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf* (*g*).

The obſerving of theſe appeared to this ſelf-opinionated creature an eaſy taſk; and if theſe were the conditions of life, he thought himſelf ſecure of it. Hence the young man ſaith unto him, *All theſe things have I kept from my youth up: What lack I yet* (*h*)? q. d. "I can, and always have anſwered all theſe "demands, as long as I can remember. Haſt thou "any others to make? I am prepared to receive "them, and do not doubt but I ſhall be able to "anſwer them too?"

But, alas! he was wofully miſtaken in his vain opinion that he had anſwered theſe. And to convince him of this, CHRIST puts him upon giving a proof as to one of them, which was indeed the ſum of the ſecond-table duties, *viz.* that *he loved his neighbour as himſelf* (*i*). And therefore ſaid to him, *If thou wilt be perfect*, i. e. in keeping only this command, *go and ſell that thou haſt, and give to the poor, and thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven; and come and follow me.* q. d. "I will put the iſſue of this mat-"ter on this ſingle trial, and if thou giveſt only this "proof of *loving thy neighbour as thyſelf*, I aſſure thee "thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven. And though "a bare performance of this ſingle inſtance of obe-"dience will not be ſufficient, by the law of works, "to make good thy claims to that treaſure, on the "foot of thy own doings; ſince a perfection of all "parts of perſonal righteouſneſs toward GOD, as "well as toward man, is neceſſary to that purpoſe: "Yet, when thou haſt done only this, *come and fol-"low me*; and I will farther inſtruct thee into the "true way of life, and conduct thee ſafe to the poſ-"ſeſſion of it."

This

(*g*) Ibid. 18, 19. (*h*) Ibid. 20. (*i*) Ibid. 21.

This was a home thrust at the vain-glorious confidence of this young man's heart. He could no longer support his pretences that he had perfectly kept so much as this single commandment, while he felt a disaffection in himself to this plain demand of compliance with it. And his heart was so strongly addicted to this world, and to the treasures he was possessed of in it, that rather than part with them, he would part with CHRIST and heaven. This therefore would by no means go down with him. *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions.*

He left CHRIST, though it was with a heavy heart. He would willingly have had eternal life; but gave the preference to the riches of this world. He would gladly have been a disciple of CHRIST, if he had spoken of a way to heaven agreeable to his own legal sentiments and carnal inclinations; but CHRIST stretched the demands of the law too far for him, and he loved his great possessions too well to resign them for CHRIST, or for the eternal life he proposed in lieu of them. And therefore he went away sorrowful at the thought, that this must be the parting point between CHRIST and him.

Luke says, *he was very sorrowful* (*l*); or, as the word [περίλυπος] signifies, he was girt or compassed round with sorrows, as one extremely sorrowful. *Mark* adds, that *he was sad at that saying* (*m*). The word [συγνάσας] signifies being troubled with indignation, and is used in a metaphorical sense to express a *lowring sky* (*n*), [συγνάζων ὁ οὐρανός.] He was sorely grieved and vexed, confounded and enraged in his mind, and put on a lowring countenance, to see all his former vain confidences overthrown, and to think that he must miss of heaven, unless he abandoned what his soul, his life and happiness were so intirely

(*l*) Luke xviii. 23. (*m*) Mark x. 22.
(*n*) Matt. xvi. 3.

bound up in, that, whatever might be the consequence, he would not resign it.

And O how many are there, like this young man, that cannot but wish for a saving interest in CHRIST and eternal glory; but are grieved and vexed at the thought, that they cannot have them in their own way! In the way of their own wisdom and righteousness; or in the way of their own lusts and indulgences: And rather than abandon their trust in the first, or their gratifications of the last, will give up CHRIST, and all good hopes of eternal life.

Thus we have attempted to settle the meaning and connection of our text and context; and, as I humbly hope, have set them in a fair and easy light. And we have been the longer upon this, because I take it to be of considerable moment for clearing off some plausible objections, that have been raised from thence, both against the divinity of CHRIST; and the way of salvation alone by him.

The grand design I have farther in view, suitable to the state of a young audience, is to take an occasion from this young man's going away from CHRIST, when he heard his saying;

To consider some obstructions, which are most peculiar to young persons, to keep them off from seeking after CHRIST, and eternal life through him; and, as we go along, to attempt, by the assistance and blessing of GOD, to remove them.

The universal darkness and depravity of human nature by the fall; and the indulged sensuality, prejudices, and enmity of carnal minds against GOD and real godliness, are the main fundamental obstructions to all true and spiritual regards to CHRIST and religion, in every age of man, and in every age of the world. But these discover themselves after a different manner in different persons, according to their different stations, circumstances, constitutions, tempers, education, companions, and years. One

stage

ſtage of life is moſt incident to a prevalence of ſome forms of theſe corruptions; and another to others, as the moſt immediate hindrances and objections againſt CHRIST, and the way to eternal life through him. Accordingly my preſent deſign is to meet with thoſe impediments, that ſeem to be the moſt uſual and remarkable attendants of youth; though not ſo confined to them, but that older perſons may likewiſe be intangled with them. And I ſhall begin with,

Firſt, Self-conceit.

I put this firſt, becauſe, as you have heard, it ſo obviouſly gave a wrong turn to the young man mentioned in our text. And this is one of the moſt prevailing infirmities and vices of young people. It is a ſort of epidemical diſeaſe, that finds the moſt ſuitable diſpoſitions in their minds to receive it, and that gathers ſtrength without control, before obſervation, experience, and ſolid judgment, or higher influence, have lent any aſſiſtance to correct it. As ſoon as they begin to get a little ſmattering of knowledge, they are ready to think they know abundantly more than they do, and to ſet up for competent judges of all truth and conduct.

In the pride of their ſprightly minds, they are apt to fancy that all happineſs, for this world and the next, lies within the compaſs of their own management; that they have wiſdom ſufficient to guide themſelves, ſtrength enough to help themſelves, and righteouſneſs enough, within their own power, to recommend themſelves to GOD's acceptance whenever they pleaſe. Hence they grow ſelf-ſufficient, and think it needleſs, or beneath them, to lie low at the foot of GOD, to be greatly humbled for ſin, to renounce all confidence in themſelves, or to yield up their own admired reaſonings to the obedience of faith.

They almoſt ſcorn to ſuſpect their own ſalvation, or to give themſelves much trouble about it; or to

be reminded of their danger, and warned to fly from the wrath to come; or to be told of their need of CHRIST, and put upon applying in good earneſt to him for wiſdom and ſtrength, to guide and carry them on in his way; and for righteouſneſs to intitle them to eternal life. O how many among the younger tribe hath this ſelf-opiniatrety kept off from CHRIST, and ſhut out from heaven! The only Savior himſelf hath told us, that *they that are whole need not a phyſician; but they that are ſick. He came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance* (*o*). And when any *go about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs*, they will *not ſubmit themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God* (*p*). The pride of their hearts will not bow to this ſelf-humbling way of righteouſneſs; but inſtead of yielding to it, riſes up with ſcornful indignation againſt it.

But, alas, how blind are they while they thus flatter themſelves that they ſee! How monſtrous and deformed are ſinful creatures bloated with their own ſufficiency! How unſuitable to the depending and degenerate ſtate of human nature is what they fancy to be their glory! And how expoſed do they lie in the midſt of all their imaginary ſafety! However they may delude themſelves, the inſpired writers aſſure us, *that the way of man is not in himſelf; that it is not in man that walks to direct his ſteps* (*q*); and that *he that truſteth in his own heart, is a fool* (*r*). And *how ſhould man be juſt with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot anſwer him one of a thouſand* (*s*).

Conſider, O young man or woman, how holy, ſpiritual, and exceeding broad the demands of GOD's law and juſtice are, how ſevere his curſe for every ſin, and how early they take hold on thee, who, young as thou art, haſt a ſinful nature, and haſt begun a ſinful life. Give thyſelf leave to reflect ſeriouſly

(*o*) Luke v. 31, 32. (*p*) Rom. x. 4. (*q*) Jer. x. 24.
(*r*) Prov. xxii. 26. (*s*) Job xix. 2, 3.

ously how unsuitable thou art in thy temper and dispositions to this holy God, and to his law of righteousness: In how many instances of sins of omission and commission; in thought, word, and deed, thou hast already offended: How many past follies thy own conscience hath sometimes discovered, and wished undone: And how often thy strongest resolutions against sin, and for God, have been already defeated. And then think with thyself, whether a humble, penitent temper of mind, toward the great and offended God, doth not become thee: Whether a Redeemer's blood is not necessary for thy pardon; and a renewing spirit for thy recovery: Whether thou canst appear with safety and boldness at the bar of the great and jealous God, without an atoning perfect righteousness to answer for thee; or canst get to heaven without divine light and grace to conduct thee thither. And from whom canst thou possibly have these, but from him, who is set up *to be a light to the* Gentiles, *and God's salvation to the end of the earth*; and in whom alone is *righteousness and strength* (*t*)? Or whither wouldst thou go for all salvation, but to him, *that hath the words of eternal life*; and who is *the way, the truth, and the life*; so that *no man comes to the Father but by him* (*u*)? But another obstruction arises from,

Secondly, The pleasures and vanities of youth; especially when they are fed by great possessions.

It is reasonable to suppose, that the young man in our text had his pleasures or ambition to serve by the riches he was so fond of. The evangelist *Luke* calls him *a certain ruler* (*x*). He was probably one of the Consistory of XXIII. His riches gave him the greater figure in that station; and had he been stript of them, he must have sunk at once from all his tickling grandeur, and from all profuse indulgences of sensitive pleasure. These are usually twin-

(*t*) Isa. xlix. 6. and xlv. 24. (*u*) John vi. 68. and xiv. 6.
(*x*) Luke xviii. 18.

ſiſters, and the moſt inſnaring inticements of youth, and their value of riches, is chiefly for the ſake of theſe.

The wiſe man tells us, and daily experience confirms the obſervation, that *childhood and youth are vanity* (*y*). And the Apoſtle *Paul* intimates, that youthful age hath its peculiar irregular appetites, which he calls *youthful luſts* (*z*). Hence he charges *Titus* to *teach young women to be ſober, and young men to be ſober-minded* (*a*).

The former part of youth, which may be called childhood, I mean the age of boys and girls, is carried off from religious thoughts of CHRIST, and eternity, by the ſtrong impreſſions that ſenſible objects make upon them; by their buſying, and pleaſing themſelves with little trifles, and filling up their time and thoughts with play. As they grow up to young men and women, their corrupt propenſions for other ſenſual pleaſures grow up with them.

Some are carried away with dreſs and ſhow; and others with merriment and jollity, with ſports and paſtimes, muſic and dancing; hunting, hawking, and the like; which often become very criminal by an unſeaſonable or an exceſſive indulgence of them. Others give themſelves up to ſtill more guilty and defiling pleaſures: Some to revelling and banqueting, tippling and drunkenneſs: Others to ſtage-plays, maſquerades and gaming, lewdneſs and immodeſty: Others to over-reaching, defrauding and deceiving, which they call outwitting their neighbours: And others to the unnatural pleaſure of tormenting their fellow creatures: Others take a monſtrous delight in profaning GOD's holy name, ſabbaths and ordinances: Others in bantering and ridiculing all revealed religion, or at leaſt all its ſacred incomprehenſibles, and all appearances of ſtrict and ſpiritual piety. And ſome run with greedineſs into moſt,

(*y*) Eccleſ. xi. 10.
(*z*) 2 Tim. ii. 22.
(*a*) Tit. ii. 4, 6.

moſt, if not all of theſe, being *fooliſh*, *diſobedient*, *deceived*, *ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures* (*b*).

Not only the worſt of theſe, but all theſe are, one way or other, defiling pleaſures. The groſſeſt of them form a deſperate impious debauchee. And the moſt tolerable among them, if once they get the aſcendant in the affections, effeminate young minds, weaken their guard, lay them open to farther ill impreſſions, ſtupify and deprave their conſciences, and give them a diſreliſh to all ſerious thoughts of GOD and CHRIST, of religion and eternity. So that as long as they *live in pleaſure, they are dead while they live* (*c*). They are *dead in trepaſſes and ſins* (*d*): Dead to GOD; dead to all ſpiritual taſte, to all holy ſenſation and action, and to all true happineſs. Theſe youthful pleaſures have ſuch full poſſeſſion of their minds, that they cannot bear the thoughts of parting with them upon any terms whatſoever. They are *lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God* (*e*). Tho' ſome of them may at times be ſorry to find an inconſiſtency in keeping theſe, and having CHRIST and eternal life; yet they are ſo immerſed in them, that they will rather run all riſks for eternity, than be divorced from them.

But what a hideous caſe is this! To be ſo debaſed in the temper of your minds, as to loſe all the laudable appetites and advantages of an intellectual rational nature; and to be ſunk into the deformity of a devil, and into the meanneſs of a brute! To be ſo drenched in malignant delights, and in ſenſual fading and ſurfeiting pleaſures, as to forego all real and eternal ſatisfactions for them, and to intail inſupportable endleſs miſeries upon yourſelves by them!

And, after all, what is there in the pleaſures that bewitch you at this rate? They may cloy the ſenſes, and cajole ſome vile paſſion; but can never ſatisfy the mind, or bear a ſolemn reflection. They are

(*b*) Tit. iii. 3. (*c*) 1 Tim. v. 6. (*d*) Eph. ii. 1.
(*e*) 2 Tim. iii. 4.

enjoyed in a sort of thoughtless hurry; they go off with an insipid flatness, and afterwards turn upon conscience with a sting. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye now are*, or ought to be, *ashamed? For the end of those things is death* (*e*).

These unreasonable sordid pleasures are not to be compared with the exalted substantial delights that are to be found even in this lower world, in the knowledge of CHRIST, and communion with him; in the service and enjoyment of GOD in him; and in conformity to him. *His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace* (*f*). *A day in God's courts is better than a thousand in the* envious and voluptuous *tents of wickedness* (*g*). *Great peace have they who love his law; and nothing shall offend them* (*h*). Yea, *he will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him, because they trust in him* (*i*). *The joys of faith are unspeakable and full of glory* (*k*). And *the peace of God*, which he gives his children in CHRIST, *passeth all understanding* (*l*). Can you say thus of youthful pleasures? Will they match, will they bear such just and high encomiums as these? Much less are all your flat and transient pleasures of youth to be compared with that *fulness of joy, that is in God's presence* above; and those rapturous *pleasures, that are at his right hand for evermore* (*m*).

These accounts of divine consolations are the true sayings of GOD; and the records of sober, wise, and faithful men; of men, that had themselves felt the inward solace, and were able to compare it with all sensations from without; and of some men, that had tried the utmost variety and extent of sensual gratifications. They are likewise attested upon experience by thousands now living upon earth; and none ever were truly acquainted with CHRIST, heartily engaged and devoted to him, and possessed of good hope through

(*e*) Rom. vi. 21. (*f*) Prov. iii. 17. (*g*) Psal. lxxxiv. 10.
(*h*) Psal. cxix. 165. (*i*) Isa. xxvi. 3. (*k*) 1 Pet. i. 8.
(*l*) Phil. iv. 7. (*m*) Psal. xvi. 11.

through grace of eternal life, but they have been forced to join their testimony to the excellence of these satiating, matchless joys. Can there, after all this, be any reason for you to doubt the reality of these things? *O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him* (*n*).

But suppose you have no value for these joys; yet *who among you can dwell with devouring fire, or everlasting burnings* (*o*)? And if your present pleasures keep you off from seeking salvation by JESUS CHRIST, you will sooner or later, it may be ere you are aware, drop down from them into eternal destruction; as *Job* describes their case, *who say to God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave* (*p*). Happy would it be for them, if they could lie in the grave insensate for ever. But they must *come forth to the resurrection of damnation* (*q*): And *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* (*r*).

O how can your soft and voluptuous minds bear the horrors and roughnesses of that vengeance, which will exclude you from all kinds of pleasure, and subject you to all agonizing torments without abatement or end? Are all your youthful vanities worth enjoying at this sad expence? But another obstruction is,

Thirdly, A false prejudice, as if the ways of CHRIST were rough and melancholy.

Thus

(*n*) Psal. xxxiv, 8.
(*o*) Isa. xxxiii. 14.
(*p*) Job xxi. 12—15.
(*q*) John v. 29.
(*r*) 2 Thes. i. 7, 8, 9.

Thus the young man thought, when CHRIST called him to *sell what he had, and to take up the cross, and follow him* (*s*), as another evangelist represents it.

Young minds are most prone to apprehend a severity in CHRIST's religion, and to be frighted at it. They think there is something very terrible in acts of repentance, self-denial, and mortification of sin; and something very disagreeably awful and forced in serious converses with a holy GOD, and in walking with exactness, as in his sight and presence, with a reference to the future judgment. And they cannot endure the thoughts of reproaches and persecutions, that may befal them for the sake of CHRIST. Hence they are apt to imagine that, if once they give up themselves and their names to CHRIST, in a strict and solemn profession of him, they must take their leave of all the satisfactions of life, and enter into a dull and melancholy scene, and stormy passage for all the remainder of their days.

But I hope much need not be said to remove this prejudice, after what you have heard, under the former head, of the pleasure of CHRIST's ways. However, it may be proper to add a few thoughts farther to this purpose.

The design of CHRIST's coming into the world was to *make crooked things straight, and rough ways smooth* (*t*). He takes off greater roughness from our ways, than we can find in his ways. He smooths our tempers, by the operations of his grace, calms and softens our boisterous and rugged passions, rectifies the disorders of our souls, and makes things so easy within, as gives a softening turn to every thing without. His religion is calculated to exalt and delight, instead of depressing and sowring human nature. And the only true satisfying pleasure of life takes its date from the day of a man's acquaintance with him, and surrender up to him.

As

(*s*) Mark x. 21. (*t*) Luke iii. 5.

As to thoſe things which you now diſreliſh, and think irkſome and ſevere; if once you were partakers of the grace that is to be found in CHRIST, it would give ſuch a turn to your taſte, as would render them all agreeable and delightful. What may at firſt ſeem troubleſome in his way and work, will, as you go on, grow more familiar by the aids of his Spirit, until you feel *his yoke to be eaſy, and his burden light* (*u*): And, contrary to your own preſent thoughts, you will then be forced to confeſs, that the higheſt pleaſures you ever experienced hitherto, are low mean inſipid things, not worthy to be named the ſame day with the noble employments and entertainments of the chriſtian life.

There is ſuch a melting pleaſure in Goſpel-repentance, godly ſorrow, holy mournings and relentings for ſin in the view of a crucified Savior, ſuch an attractive comelineſs in doing the will of GOD, ſuch an approved conſciouſneſs in a true greatneſs of ſpirit, that contemns this world, and ſuch a triumphant complacency in a felt victory over ſin and ſelf, as beyond all compariſon exceed the inglorious pleaſures of ſin. And holy freedoms and enlargements of converſes with GOD in CHRIST, of adorations of him, and ſelf-dedications to him, with aſſuring proſpects of glory, honor, and immortality, exalt the ſoul to the higheſt pitch of noble extaſy, and are the beginnings of heavenly joys.

And if you ſhould meet with tribulations in the world for the ſake of CHRIST, he will never let you be a loſer by them. *For as the ſufferings of Chriſt abound in you, ſo your conſolations alſo ſhall abound by him* (*x*). And *your light affliction, which is but for a moment, ſhall work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* (*y*). Hence CHRIST ſays to all his true diſciples, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you:*

(*u*) Matt. xi. 30. (*x*) 2 Cor. i. 5.
(*y*) Chap. iv. 17.

you: Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (z). But another obſtruction is,

Fourthly, An inconſiderate, heedleſs temper.

Young people are very apt to be heedleſs, and to act only upon preſent views and impreſſions, without weighing their conſequences, or looking forward to what ſhall be hereafter. They do not care to give themſelves the trouble of ſerious conſideration and reflection. But had rather take things juſt according to preſent outward appearance, and *flatter themſelves in their own eyes, till their iniquity be found to be hateful* (a).

They do not conſider that they have immortal ſouls to be ſaved or loſt for ever; and that they are accountable creatures, and muſt give an account to God of all their thoughts, words, and deeds. They do not conſider what depraved guilty creatures they are by nature and practice; how expoſed they lie to the wrath of God; and what indiſpenſible need they have of Christ, of his blood, righteouſneſs and ſpirit, to pardon, juſtify and ſanctify them, if ever they get ſafe to heaven. They do not conſider what their preſent ſtate and condition is before God, as to their ſpiritual and eternal concerns; nor what end God is like to make with them. For want of theſe, and ſuch ſort of conſiderations, they heedleſsly go on in ſin, as if there was no harm or danger in it; and lay aſide Christ and religion, as if not worth their regards, or as if it were all one to them, whether they go to heaven or hell.

But ſurely this is the moſt childiſh, ſinful, dangerous and deſtructive inconſiderateneſs you can be guilty of. For Christ is infinitely worthy of all the attention of your minds, and of your utmoſt care for a ſaving acquaintance with him, *whom to know is life eternal* (b). He is the moſt amiable and glorious object your thoughts can be converſant with; and it is ten thouſand times of greater importance

(z) John xiv. 27. (a) Pſal. xxxvi. 2. (b) John xvii. 2.

tance to you, whether you shall be eternally happy, or eternally miserable, than all the things of this perishing world put together possibly can be. For *what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (c)?*

To be heedless about smaller matters is really a blemish upon your characters: But to be heedless about things of life and death for eternity, about things essentially necessary to your happiness, is a reproach without excuse. This is all over silly and childish: And it is as sinful, as it is foolish. You hereby act beneath human nature, and against its first law of self-preservation; you do violence to the little reason you have; and offer the highest indignities to the God that made you, and to all the overtures of his grace through a Redeemer. And this makes it as dangerous and mischievous, as it is childish and sinful. For you hereby lay yourselves open to all manner of snares, temptations, and wickedness; provoke God to give you up to your own indolence and stupidity of heart; and ripen yourselves apace for a destruction that slumbers not. And Oh the consternation, when awakened vengeance, and an awakened conscience shall surprise the vain youth that never thought of his ways, or of their end before!

Is it not therefore the highest wisdom now, while you are in the way of recovering grace, to consider *Solomon*'s rousing admonition; *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart chear thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment (d)?* And is it not high time for you to think of flying to Jesus, to save you from your sins, and from the wrath to come? But another obstruction is,

Fifthly, A presumptuous daring rashness of spirit.

Young

(c) Matt. xvi. 26. (d) Eccles. xi. 9.

Young persons are most sanguine, and they are often so unto fool-hardiness. They are apt to pride themselves in bold adventurous exploits. Their strong and vigorous passions overpoise their judgments: They push them on to pursue their humor at all adventures; and make them impatient of restraint. With this temper the young men of *Rehoboam*'s council ran him into rash unadvised measures, to the loss of the greatest part of his kingdom, 1 *Kings* xii. 10, 11.

This heady rash temper, cherished by the heat of their blood, prompts them on in the ways of their own eyes; stops their ears against sober counsel and reproof; makes them fearless, and, as they think, brave in the ways of sin; daring enough to run the desperate risk of eternal perdition, and, as it were, to bid defiance to GOD himself.

But what prodigious madness of heart is this, to run headlong upon the pikes of eternal destruction; to rush forward in a war against the great GOD, and against your own souls; and to prance in the ways of sin and death, like a high-mettled horse in the hottest dangers of a battle! As GOD said of a people that refused to return to him: *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle* (*e*).

This is the rashest undertaking, and the most tremendous fool-hardiness, that ever entered into the heart of man. *For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers* (*f*). Nothing can be got by this hardy attempt against GOD: But certain unavoidable ruin is intailed upon those that persist in it. For *though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished* (*g*). His hottest vengeance shall burst out upon such a bold

(*e*) Jer. viii. 6. (*f*) Job. xv. 24, 25. (*g*) Prov. xi. 21.

bold transgressor. If, *when he hears the words of God's curse, he blesses himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; and all the curses that are written in this book, shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven* (*h*).

You are no match for the Almighty, no more able to stand before his indignation, than stubble before devouring flames, or briers and thorns before unquenchable fire. Hence is God's expostulation by the prophet. *Fury is not in me: Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go thro' them, I would burn them together. Or,* (which might be rendered *oh* or *but*) *let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me* (*i*). Here God says, *fury is not in me,* i. e. toward my vineyard, or toward my faithful covenant-people, of which he had said in the foregoing verse, *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it day and night* (*k*). But since my people only are secure from my wrath, who would venture to act the rebel against me, as if he could make his part good with me? Who *would set* such combustible impotent bristles, as *briers and thorns against me?* This is madness and folly to the last degree. I would soon consume them. *But let him* rather *take hold on my strength*; that is, as I humbly conceive, either, alluding to *Jacob*'s wrestling with the angel, let him by believing, penitent and importunate prayer stay my hand, who am ready to be intreated. Or else, leading our thoughts to Christ, the promised Messiah, let him lay hold by faith on the Messiah, who is my strength; *He may make peace with me,* he only is fit or able to do it, *he shall make peace with me.* I will accept of him for this purpose. Or, as it may be be rendered, *He shall make peace with*

(*h*) Levit. xxix. 19, 20. (*i*) Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. (*k*) ver. 3.

with me, he ſhall make peace with me; redoubling the expreſſion to recommend this only peace-maker with the utmoſt vehemence.

This exactly ſuits the reading in the *Hebrew* *; and well agrees to CHRIST, who is called *the power of God* (*l*), and hath *made peace* by the blood of his croſs; and faith in whom, as exhibited in the promiſes, is called *laying hold on the hope ſet before us* (*m*). Accordingly the following words in *Iſaiah*'s context ſeem to ſpeak of CHRIST, where it is ſaid of the ſame perſon, that ſhould make peace with GOD, *he ſhall cauſe them that come of* Jacob *to take root*; Iſrael *ſhall bloſſom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit* (*n*). This, in the judgment of judicious commentators †, relates to the days of the Meſſiah, when he ſhould ſpread his kingdom through the earth. Why then ſhould not the foregoing verſe, in connection with this, be underſtood of him, who is our peace?

There is nothing, O headſtrong youth, but unavoidable deſtruction in your preſumptuous daring oppoſition to GOD; and it is only in coming by faith to him through CHRIST, that you can find peace and ſafety with him. *O kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him* (*o*). But another obſtruction ariſes from,

Sixthly, The companions of youth.

Evil communications corrupt good manners (*p*). Young people are naturally inclined to company; and it uſually proves a ſnare to them. They have either no judgment or no inclination to look through their company, and to chuſe ſuch aſſociates, as are ſober, and might be profitable to them. They ſcorn to be directed

* או יחזק במעוזי יעשה שלום לי
שלום יעשה לי:

(*l*) 1 Cor. i. 24. Eph. ii. 14, 15. (*m*) Heb. vi. 18.
(*n*) Iſa. xxvii. 6. † Vide *Piſcat.* & *Calv.* in loc.
(*o*) Pſal. ii. 12. (*p*) 1 Cor. xv. 33.

directed in their choice; and when once they are linked to loose, rakish, irreligious and profane companions, it is exceeding difficult to break them off, and a thousand to one but they become like them, to their present and eternal ruin. So just is *Solomon*'s observation, *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: But a companion of fools shall be destroyed* (q).

And if at any time their consciences are awakened, by some word or providence of God: Or if, in some seasons of solitary reflection, they are convinced of the evil of their ways; and under the power of those convictions, are almost forced to resolve to forsake their wicked associates, and to seek after God in Christ, and mind the concerns of their immortal souls: Yet the next time they meet their old companions, all their late remorse and resolutions are forgotten, and they are ensnared again as much as ever. Or else they are afraid that, if once they begin to be religious in earnest, their old acquaintance will take notice of the alteration, and think it strange that they do not run into the same excess of riot with them as formerly, and will ridicule and banter them for it. And they cannot bear the thoughts of deriding treatment from those very persons, whom they used to be so fond of. Though they begin to be ashamed to be seen with them; yet they are more ashamed to be laughed at by them.

But, as the Apostle says, *If ye be followers of that which is good, who is he that will harm you?* And *if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled* (r). *If God be for you, who can be against you* (s)? On the other hand, if God be against you, who can be for you? Or what advantage can you have by all your vain or leud friends, if he is your enemy? And if you are so fond of receiving honor from such worthless creatures as these, *and seek not the honor that comes*

(q) Prov. xiii. 20.
(r) 1 Pet. iii. 13, 14.
(s) Rom. viii. 31.

from God only (*s*), *how can you believe* to the ſaving of your ſouls?

But let me aſk you two or three ſerious queſtions farther, and leave them with your conſciences for their anſwer. Which do you really think is moſt deſirable; to have an intereſt in the favor and eſteem of the worſt of men, or of God, and Christ, and angels, and all good men? And which would you be willing to keep company with in the other world? Would you be willing to keep company with your preſent irreligious or vicious aſſociates, and have your lot with them for ever? Would you willingly die with them, and go to hell with them, and keep them and devils company there? Or had you not rather *die the death of the righteous, and have your laſt end like his* (*t*)? Had you not rather keep company with them, and dwell with them in the bleſſed preſence of God, and of all his glorious angels for ever? O then let wiſdom's counſel be acceptable to you! ſaying, *Whoſo is ſimple let him turn in hither—Forſake the fooliſh, and live; and go in the way of underſtanding* (*u*). How happy is their temper, way, and end, who are helped to ſay in the feeling ſincerity of their ſouls, *Depart from me, ye evil-doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.* And *I am a companion of all them that fear thee; and of them that keep thy precepts* (*x*)! The laſt obſtruction I ſhall mention is,

Seventhly, An apprehenſion of long life.

Perſons in the morning of their age are ready to flatter themſelves that they have a long day of life before them; that death lies a great way off, and that they have many years beyond others to ſpend upon earth. Hence they think it is time enough for them a great while hereafter to look out after Christ, to repent, believe, and turn to God, and prepare for the other world. When they have enjoyed themſelves, and taken the recreations of youth, and

(*s*) John v. 44.
(*t*) Numb. xxiii. 10.
(*u*) Prov. ix. 4, 6.
(*x*) Pſal. cxix. 63, 115.

and the advantages of bufineſs, converſation, and acquaintance in the world, then they deſign to think of following CHRIST, and of ſetting out for heaven: But they are not in haſte for theſe things yet; and therefore lay them aſide for the preſent, and put them off to none knows when.

But this, alas! hath been the ruin of innumerable multitudes now in hell. O how many among the damned are miſerably rueing the fatal cheat they put upon themſelves by theſe vain amuſements and delays, now finding it paſt remedy! This is indeed thinking and acting like children in underſtanding, as if the greateſt, and moſt important of all things elſe, ſhould be left at all hazards the longeſt, and be put off to the very laſt, till all the trifles of this life are taken care of, and done with; and as if that, which deſerves and demands the moſt, the firſt, and the beſt time, ſhould be thruſt aſide, and reſerved for the leaſt time, and for the laſt and feebleſt time of your lives, and it may be for no time at all. CHRIST, on the other hand, ſays, *Seek firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs; and all theſe things ſhall be added to you* (*y*).

Have you not often ſeen young lives cut off from a flouriſhing ſtate of health, as ſoon, or ſooner than older? What then is your ſecurity againſt dying more than others? Have not ſome of you, that are now in the days of your youth, weak and ſickly conſtitutions? Or have you never had any ſickneſſes that threatened death? Suppoſe they had proved unto death, what had now become of your ſouls? Or ſuppoſe any illneſs ſhould quickly increaſe, or return with ſuch violence, as to put an end to your days upon earth, where do you think your ſouls will be then? Look into the bills of mortality, and ſee what numbers die every week, that have not reached beyond your years: And who knows but ſome of you, or which of you may be numbered

(*y*) Matt. vi. 33.

among the dead of the week next enſuing? Your life is as much a vapor as others; and, ſetting aſide the extremely aged and infirm, you are as likely to die before another year, month, week, or day, as older perſons are. And if you ſhould die before the time comes, that you propoſed for ſeeking after CHRIST and eternal life, or before you have a ſecure intereſt in them, what a fooliſh dream have you entertained; and how ſurpriſingly terrible will your diſappointment be, when you ſlump into hell?

Beſides, faith and repentance are the gifts of GOD: And he that reſiſts the Spirit, puts off and ſtifles his kindly motions in his young days, has very little ground to hope that he ſhall find them effectual in old age. For GOD himſelf hath ſaid, *My Spirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man* (*z*). And *woe to you*, if that good Spirit once gives you up, and *departs from you* (*a*). Your hearts will then harden beyond all poſſibility of true repentance. You will be like trees *twice dead, plucked up by the roots* (*b*), of which there is no hope of reviving. And obſervation may eaſily inform you, that the inſtances are exceeding rare of any, that are ſavingly brought home to CHRIST, after thirty or forty years old, if they have ſat under the means of grace, and gone on in a courſe of ſin, unconcerned about CHRIST and his ſalvation till then.

Concluſion. Now for a concluſion, which may be called the application of all this: If after what you have heard, any of you will go away from CHRIST, and give up your purſuits after eternal life: Muſt you not go away ſad and grieved to think of your diſmal loſs? Are you harder than the young man of our text? More fooliſh and wicked than he; ſo as to caſt off all eſteem of theſe bleſſings, and not be moved, as he was, at the dreadful conſequences of failing of them? If this ſhould be the caſe of any of you, which GOD forbid, that young man will riſe

(*z*) Gen. vi. 3. (*a*) Hoſ. ix. 12. (*b*) Jude 12.

rise up in judgment against you; and his sense of unhappiness, in being separated from CHRIST and heaven, will aggravate the evil of your stupidity, who are easy without them.

And, if thou, O sinner, hast any sadness of heart, because thou canst not have the guilty pleasure of indulging thy irregular appetites, or of priding thyself in thy own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, consistently with thy having CHRIST and heaven: Think with thyself, this is my folly and wickedness; and beg of GOD to give thee a better temper of heart, to humble thee for this very thing, to turn the whole stream of thy sorrow and indignation against thyself on this account, and to make a thorough change upon thee by his Spirit and grace. And consider, if thou art sad and grieved at the thoughts of what thy fondness for these infatuating idols of thy heart will cost thee, how great will thy sadness be hereafter, when thou comest to be separated from them, and from all future glories at once; and when thou shalt feel the righteous wrath of GOD Almighty, for all thy preference of them to him?

But why shouldst thou give way to any uneasiness on the account of what thou must part with for CHRIST? Thou wilt find better things in finding him, than thou canst lose for him. What he absolutely insists on thy renouncing for him, is better lost than kept. It is only the deformity of thy soul and life, and what is inglorious to him, and really so to thyself too, that he peremptorily demands thee to resign. And, in the ordinary course of things in our peaceful days, an enjoyment of all the comforts of this life, as far as they are worth having, and as far as they subserve any just measures of real and manly pleasure, is no way inconsistent with true faith in CHRIST, and obedience to him, or with warrantable expectations of heaven through him: But the pleasure that consists in the enjoyment

of outward comforts, will rather be improved to a more ſublime, agreeable, and refined reliſh by theſe means. And if thou obtaineſt the gift by grace to eternal life, the delights of that, even in this world, will much more than compenſate for the loſs of thy preſent carnal delights; and thou wilt have an eternity of lovely realities to fill up an inconceivably better happineſs, in the abſence of all periſhing things. Yea, ſet thy loſſes and ſufferings for CHRIST, as high as thou canſt ſuppoſe, or as high as ever any of his diſciples endured; here is an eternal, ample amends, and infinitely more than an amends for them all. And if, in ſitting down to count the coſt, thou reckoneſt right, the balance will be, *that the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in thee* (*c*). This is the happineſs propoſed in the Goſpel for thy exchange: And if thy heart is brought to prefer GOD in CHRIST for a portion to all things elſe; to ſeek him in good earneſt as ſuch by faith in the great Redeemer; and, with a dependence on his grace and ſtrength, to follow him faithfully in his ways and appointments, thou mayſt go from hence rejoicing, as one that thinkeſt thou heareſt CHRIST ſaying to thee, *Thou ſhalt have treaſure in heaven.*

And if any of your ſouls have been helped over your impediments, and brought to CHRIST and good hope of eternal life through him: Bleſs GOD, and give him glory. It is he that hath made thee to differ from others, and from what thou thyſelf once wert; and it is he that hath carried thee through the hindrances that otherwiſe would have been too hard for thee, as they have been for thouſands of others. Admire the riches of victorious and diſtinguiſhing grace. See that thou makeſt its praiſes practical, in a firm adherence to CHRIST, in an honorable profeſſion of his name, and in all manner of

(*c*) Rom. viii. 18.

of holy converſation and godlineſs. And rejoice in hope of his glory, with humble confidence that he who hath thus far brought thee will perform all things for thee; that he will *keep thee from falling, and preſent thee faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wiſe God our Savior, be glory and majeſty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen* (*d*).

(*d*) Jude 24, 25.

SERMON V.

Early Seekers of CHRIST Directed and Encouraged.

Preached at *Petty-France*, *May* 2. 1729.

PROV. VIII. 17.

Those that seek me early, shall find me.

THESE words, together with the whole chapter, are *Wisdom*'s speech to the sons of men. *Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Hear, for I will speak of excellent things* (*e*).

This wisdom is supposed by some to be the essential wisdom of GOD, or that attribute of the divine nature, which bears that name; and by others, that knowledge of GOD, which he gives us in and by his word. But it seems to me, that several passages in this chapter cannot by any figure of speech, without the utmost violence, be considered as the language of either of these. Accordingly, the best of antient and modern interpreters understand them of CHRIST, the personal wisdom of GOD.

He

(*e*) ver. 1, 4, 6.

He is called in ſcripture *the word*, and *the word of God*, *wiſdom*, and *the wiſdom of God*, by way of eminence and peculiarity, as *all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge are hid in him* (*f*), and all the deſigns of that wiſdom toward the ſons of men are diſcovered by him. He is *the word that in the beginning was with God, and was God* (*g*). And *his name is called the word of God* (*h*). He ſpeaks of himſelf, as *wiſdom that is juſtified of all her children* (*i*): And the evangeliſt *Luke* introduces his words thus, *Therefore alſo ſaith the wiſdom of God, I will ſend them prophets* (*k*), &c. which are recorded in *Matthew* as CHRIST's own words, *Behold, I ſend unto you prophets* (*l*), &c. And he is called *the power of God, and the wiſdom of God* (*m*). Theſe appellations of CHRIST, are a proper comment on the *Wiſdom* that ſpeaks in the chapter where our text is. The title agrees to CHRIST; the whole diſcourſe runs in a perſonal ſtrain; and a proſopopœia is by no means to be allowed of, when the terms may be taken in a proper ſenſe. All the parts of this diſcourſe may be fairly applied to CHRIST, and ſeveral of them plainly appear to be peculiar to him, and uncapable of being applied, with any juſtneſs of thought, to any thing or perſon, but him.

And as CHRIST is the object of our deareſt love, devotion, deſire and choice; and as our richeſt advantage lies in his love to us, and in his being found by us; ſo nothing can be more ſuitable to his demands upon us, or more encouraging to our expectations from him, than what he ſays in the verſe which concludes with our text: *I love them that love me, and thoſe that ſeek me early ſhall find me.* In ſpeaking to the laſt clauſe of theſe words, I ſhall, by his aſſiſtance,

Firſt,

(*f*) Col. ii. 3. (*g*) John i. 1. (*h*) Rev. xix. 13.
(*i*) Luke vii. 35. (*k*) Luke xi. 49. (*l*) Matt. xxiii. 34.
(*m*) 1 Cor. i. 24.

Firſt, Conſider what it is to ſeek CHRIST early.

Secondly, What peculiar encouragements there are to ſuch as ſeek him early, that they ſhall find him.

And cloſe all with ſome improvements.

Firſt, Conſider what it is to ſeek CHRIST early.

Seeking the LORD, is ſometimes uſed in ſcripture for the particular duty of prayer; and at other times for the whole of religion. In this wideſt ſenſe of the expreſſion it may be underſtood, where it is ſaid, *They ſhall praiſe the Lord, that ſeek him. All the ends of the world ſhall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations ſhall worſhip before thee* (*n*). And *hearken to me, ye that follow after righteouſneſs, ye that ſeek the Lord* (*o*).

Accordingly, to ſeek CHRIST, as it relates to the object of our ſeeking, or that which we ſeek for, is to ſeek the true knowledge of him, and a ſaving intereſt in him. It is to ſeek his favor and acceptance, his guidance and aſſiſtance, his righteouſneſs, grace and government, his image and his glory, his ſmiles upon us in this world, and his receiving us at laſt to all the glory and bleſſedneſs of the next. It is to ſeek that he may be all that to us, and that we may be all that to him, for which he is made known and propoſed in the Goſpel.

And as it relates to the acts of our ſeeking him, it is to attend with diligence upon all the means of grace, and inſtituted ordinances of divine worſhip; and to be found in the performance of all religious duties to him, and to the Father through him, by the gracious aids and influences of the holy Spirit. It is to attend upon them, and perform them, with a ſerious and inquiring temper of ſoul, with faith and love, with choice and delight, with integrity and uprightneſs of heart, with holy reſolution and continuance,

(*n*) Pſal. xxii. 26, 27. (*o*) Iſai. li. 1.

nuance, with an intire dependence on him, and humble hope in him for light and grace, for acceptance and ſucceſs.

Our text particularly ſpeaks of ſeeking him *early*, as of great importance in our ſeeking, if we would find what we ſeek for. And what this peculiar manner of ſeeking him is, is the ſubject of our preſent conſideration.

The word tranſlated *ſeeking him early*, [משחרי] ſignifies alſo carefully, earneſtly, or diligently; becauſe the things that we are moſt ſolicitous about, uſually engage our firſt inquiries before all others. And thus it is rendered in other places: *Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to ſeek thy face.* And *he that diligently ſeeketh good, procureth favor* (*p*). Hence to ſeek CHRIST *early*, may be conſidered, with reſpect to the time of life, to the day of grace, or opportunities of ſeeking him, and to all other things.

I. It is to ſeek him early, with reſpect to the time of life, or in the younger part of our days.

In this ſenſe of the word, it is ſaid, *He that loveth his ſon, chaſteneth him betimes* (*q*); *i. e.* while he is yet young. So to ſeek CHRIST early is to ſeek him betimes, like good *Joſias*, who, *while he was yet young, began to ſeek after the God of* David *his father* (*r*); and like young *Timothy*, who *from a child had known the holy ſcriptures, which were able to make him wiſe to ſalvation, through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus* (*s*). Hence ſays the royal preacher, *Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them* (*t*).

This greateſt and moſt important concern of all others, is not to be put off to the buſy time of life, that is incumbered with the cares and hurries of this world; nor to old age, that is infeebled by decays, and loaded with infirmities. Theſe are not fit ſeaſons for

(*p*) Prov. vii. 15. and xi. 27. (*q*) Prov. xiii. 24.
(*r*) 2 Chron. xxxiv. 2. (*s*) 2 Tim. iii. 15. (*t*) Eccleſ xii. 1.

for solemn transactions of this kind: The head, heart and hands, filled with other things, will find little leisure for these. And languishing broken spirits, oppressed with the weight of sickness, pain, and decrepit age, have enough to do to grapple with their own present sensible conflicts, and are too apt to sink into a confusion or indolence, that shuts out attention to future and invisible objects.

It is never too soon to seek after CHRIST; but quickly, alas! none knows how soon, it may be too late. The sooner it is begun, the better it is for us, and for those we have to do with; the more excellent it is in itself, and the more pleasure we shall have in after reflections upon it. None ever repented that they began too soon; but many have been ashamed, and troubled to think that they deferred it so long.

II. It is to seek him early, with respect to the day of grace, or to our opportunities of seeking him.

Thus the word in our text is used to express the earliest opportunities, or the first occasions, that some particular circumstances offer, or call us to, for seeking after GOD. In this sense *Bildad* said to *Job*, with regard to the distressing providences he was under, which remarkably called for his inquiries after GOD; *If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make supplication to the Almighty—though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase* (*u*). And the same word is used of *Israel*, in the time of their alarming distress, *When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God* (*x*). And says GOD, *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: In their affliction they will seek me early* (*y*). q. d. "They will "no longer delay, or put off their seeking me, as "they have done in the days of their security, ease "and fulness."

When-

(*u*) Job viii. 5. 7.
(*y*) Hos. v. 1
(*x*) Psalm lxxviii. 34.

Whenever God calls us by his word, or by any remarkable providence to seek after Christ, we should be early or speedy in attending to those calls, and seeking him according to them. The language of our souls should be like *Samuel*'s, saying, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth* (z). *When he says, Seek ye my face; our hearts should* immediately *say unto him, Thy face, Lord, will we seek* (a). And as soon as he says to any of us, as he did to *Israel, Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*; we, like them, should be early in saying to him, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of* Israel (b).

Some of you, perhaps, for want of Inclination, or for want of opportunity, have spent the early parts of your lives without hearing the Gospel, or enjoying the means of grace. But now the providence of God hath brought you under the ministry of the word, and sent his gracious calls to you by the Gospel. This is the season for you to seek early after Christ, without letting the opportunity slip. Whatever the number of your years may be, you should now look upon yourselves concerned to be speedy in it; now, while the day of grace is breaking upon you; now, as soon as you hear what a way of salvation is provided in Christ for such as you are; and now, while a door of mercy is open before you. *To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts* (c). *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation* (d).

Others of you, it may be, are under some awakening providences in concurrence with God's word, or are cast under some awakening and evangelical ministry, which you never were under before. As soon as God begins to speak to you in a remarkable manner

(z) 1 Sam. iii. 9. (a) Psal. xxvii. 8. (b) Jer. iii. 22, 23.
(c) Heb. iii. 15. (d) 2 Cor. vi. 2.

manner by all or either of theſe means, you ſhould begin to ſeek after CHRIST, if you have not yet been helped to do it; or if you have, you are now called to do it yet more and more, without delay, that you may find ſpeedy relief for your ſafety and comfort in this world, and may obtain eternal ſalvation through him in the next. Thus *Moſes* is repreſented as pleading with GOD for *Iſrael*, under a view of his awful judgments. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wiſdom. Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy ſervants. O ſatisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days* (*e*). And we may allude in this caſe to what GOD ſays by the prophet, *All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, ſee ye, when he lifteth up an enſign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye* (*f*).

Others of you, poſſibly, may have ſome ſtrivings of GOD's Spirit with you by means of his word and providence, beyond what you have formerly been favored with, or for ſome time paſt have felt. If he awakens your ſtupid conſciences, reproves, checks, and convinces you of the evil of your ways, and of your guilty, depraved, and dangerous ſtate by nature: If he leads your thoughts to CHRIST, and gives you a ſenſe of your need of him to ſave you from your ſins, and from the wrath to come; and works up any inclinations in your ſouls toward him, that you may have righteouſneſs and ſtrength in him, and may be enabled to turn to GOD from all your iniquities, through him. This is a favorable opportunity, in which you are called to ſeek him early. This is no time for a delay, leſt the bleſſed gale ſhould paſs away, and never return again. But, as the wiſe mariner takes the firſt advantage of the wind to ſet out for his intended port; ſo you ſhould be as early as poſſible in falling in with, and improving the gracious influence; and ſet forward under that

(*e*) Pſal. xc. 12, 13, 14. (*f*) Iſai. xviii. 3.

that advantage to seek after CHRIST. Hence said the church at one time, *Draw me, we will run after thee* (*g*). The time of his drawing, is the time for our running; for *no man can come to Christ, except the Father that sent him, draw him* (*h*). And hence *Ephraim* said at another time, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned* (*i*). And *I*, says *David, will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart* (*k*).

Thus the earliest opportunities, of what sort soever they are, whereby we are called to seek CHRIST, should be made use of for that purpose, immediately and without delay. And the earliest part of life, in which we are favored with them, is the season in which we ought to seek him..

III. It is to seek him early, with respect to all other things, or before and above all things else.

This relates to the earnestness and fervor with which he is to be sought in the younger part of our days, and in the first opportunities we have for seeking him.

We have already seen that the word here rendered *early*, signifies also earnestly or diligently. And thus it is to be understood in the use that the *Psalmist* makes of it with regard to seeking the LORD; *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: My soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary* (*l*). His seeking him early, evidently respects the eager desire, and earnest concern, care, and diligence, with which he sought him above all things else. And it answers to other expressions of the ardent breathings of his soul this way, as impatient of denial, whatever else he should be deprived of; particularly where he says, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days*

(*g*) Cant. i. 4. (*h*) John vi. 44. (*i*) Jer. xxxi. 18.
(*k*) Psal. cxix. 32. (*l*) Psal. lxiii. 1, 2.

days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple (*m*). And *as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God* (*n*)?

In this sense, seeking CHRIST early is to *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*. It is to seek him with the whole heart, and with the greatest seriousness of spirit, like persons in good earnest to find him. It is to seek him with the utmost intenseness and unitedness of all the powers and faculties of the soul; and that before the heart is filled with other things. And among other seasons, it is to seek him in the morning, or earliest part of the day, before the mind is diverted or embarrassed by the pleasures or business of the day. Thus *David* said, *I intreated thy favor with my whole heart*. And *my voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up* (*o*). Let us now proceed,

Secondly, To consider what peculiar encouragements there are to such as seek CHRIST early, that they shall find him.

They that seek him earnestly, before and above all things else, in the earliest time of life, and earliest opportunities that are afforded them for it, have unquestionably all the numerous encouragements to hope for success, that the Gospel sets before them in common with others, who have not been so early in it. They have all the considerations to encourage them, that arise from the absolute freeness, sovereignty, and plenteous riches of GOD's abounding grace in CHRIST, to all sorts and degrees of sinners; from the saving offices of CHRIST; from the fulness of merit, righteousness, compassion, tenderness, and faithfulness, that are in him; from his ability for and pleasure.

(*m*) Psal. xxvii. 4. (*n*) Psal. xlii. 1, 2.
(*o*) Psal. cxix. 58. and v. 3.

pleasure in his work, and in those that are willing to give him the honor of it, by coming to him that he may magnify his office toward them. They have all the encouragements that arise from GOD's delight in mercy through him, and his declared *pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy* (*p*); from the multiplied declarations and promises of his grace, from the begun workings of his Spirit in their hearts, to incline them to seek him; and from the sacred regard he hath to his truth and faithfulness, and to the honor of his own name, in saving all that come to CHRIST, and to the Father through him.

All these rich encouragements, with many others of the like kind, are yours that seek him early. They are yours, as much as, and in some respects more, than they are the encouragements of all others, that at any time whatever are enabled to seek him with their whole hearts. The sooner you begin to seek him, the greater strength and weight there is in all these encouragements to you, that you shall not miscarry, or be rejected; and you will find the fewer objections to clog them, or to incumber your faith and hope in him, according to them.

But besides all these, there are other encouragements, that you have above all others, and that are peculiar to yourselves, whose hearts are inclined betimes to seek him. And I shall suggest three or four of these, with an eye to the blessed Spirit to impress them upon your hearts, and effectually to influence you to seek him now, in your present youth, and present opportunity, without any farther delay. Therefore,

I. Early seeking him is most pleasing to him.

I begin with this, because the verse which our text concludes, leads our thoughts to it. There CHRIST says, *I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me.* This declaration of his *loving them that love him,* may be most fitly understood of his

(*p*) Psal. xlvii. 11.

peculiar complacency in those that early shew their love, by their *early seeking him.* Its being mentioned just before, and in connection with early seeking him, naturally gives this hint to our thoughts. And it is as if he should say, " My chief pleasure and " delight is in those, that are early in loving and " seeking me. This most of all takes my heart, " and is acceptable to me. Mine eye is especially " upon them for good, my tenderest affections are " toward them, my compassions move me to em- " brace them, who while their hearts are young and " tender diligently seek me. I know they cannot " tell how to bear discouragements, and it would be " ready to break their hearts to meet with severe " repulses, while their affections are tender, and " their judgments are but weak. I see their mourn- " ing love, their eager and their early desires to- " ward me; I hear their groanings after me, and " find that nothing but myself can satisfy them. " And, speaking after the manner of men, I cannot " but be well affected toward them, and listen to the " sounding of my bowels: I will surely have mercy " upon them."

Young and early seekers of CHRIST, are apt to misconstrue his conduct, and to be discouraged if they do not immediately find him. But they may think they hear the compassionate language directed to them, as it was to his people of old, *Is* Ephraim *my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord* (*q*). And *thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls which*

(*q*) Jer. xxxi. 20.

which I have made (*r*). Methinks there is ſomething exceeding ſuitable in theſe tenderneſſes of expreſſion to the abaſhed and fluttering temper of young minds, when GOD's Spirit begins to work upon them. And the account we have of CHRIST's meek and compaſſionate conduct in *Matt.* xii. 20. may in a double view, with regard to their tender age and grace, be applied to them. *A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break, and the ſmoking flax ſhall he not quench, till he ſend forth judgment unto victory.* The great ſhepherd of the ſheep *gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his boſom*; as well as *gently leads thoſe that are with young* (*s*).

With what tenderneſs did our bleſſed LORD expreſs his affection to young ones, when he ſaid, *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of God* (*t*)! And how graciouſly did he encourage, accept, and patronize the childrens *Hoſannas to the ſon of* David, ſaying, *Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and ſucklings thou haſt perfected praiſe* (*u*)? And when the young prodigal *came to himſelf* (*x*), when he began with relentings, grief and ſhame, to reflect upon his extravagant follies, and to think of going to his father, and imploring his mercy, with acknowledgments of his own guilt and unworthineſs; with what eager affection did his father behold, compaſſionate, encourage and embrace him? *When he was yet a great way off, his father ſaw him, and had compaſſion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kiſſed him* (*y*).

As wiſe and affectionate parents take extraordinary pleaſure in the firſt pretty appearances and expreſſions of their young childrens duty and love, and take ſpecial care to encourage them: And as the owners of a plantation, are moſt of all delighted with the earlieſt buddings and firſt fruits of their

(*r*) Iſa. lvii. 15, 16. (*s*) Iſa. xl. 11. (*t*) Mark x. 14, 16.
(*u*) Matt. xxi. 15, 16. (*x*) Luke xv. 17, 18, 19.
(*y*) ver. 20.

young trees, and are in a particular manner mindful of them, and careful to defend and cultivate them, that they may thrive and bring forth more fruit: So CHRIST, speaking after the manner of men, may be said to be most of all pleased, when young minds begin to be well affected toward him, and to breathe out their fervent, though broken desires after him. He is remarkably mindful of them, and takes special care to encourage them.

GOD, speaking of *Israel* under the character of a child, says, *Then I loved him, I taught* Ephraim *also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love* (z). And *Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.*——Israel *was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: All that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord* (a). He speaks of their early regards to him, in the language of love, as if it were a kindness and favor done to him: He will set his eyes upon them for good, that give him the first-fruits of their increase, the first products of their young minds: He will espouse their cause, and resent the injuries that others offer them. How much happier is their case than that of the little children that mocked the prophet *Elisha*, and thereby threw contempt on him whose prophet he was, *saying to him, Go up, thou bald-head, go up, thou bald-head!* And what was the effect of this profane irreligious taunt? *He turned back, and looked upon them, and,* doubtless under immediate suggestion from the jealous sin-avenging GOD, *he cursed them in the name of the Lord: And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tore forty and two children of them* (b).

What a kind notice did GOD take of good *Josiah*, who, while he was yet young, began to seek after the

(z) Hos. xi. 1, 3, 4. (a) Jer. ii. 2, 3.
(b) 2 Kings ii 23, 24.

the GOD of *David* his Father? *Becauſe thy heart was tender, and thou haſt humbled thyſelf before the Lord, when thou heardſt what I ſpake againſt this place, and againſt the inhabitants thereof,—I alſo have heard thee, ſaith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou ſhalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes ſhall not ſee all the evil which I will bring upon this place* (*c*). He will never forget the kindneſſes of his peoples youth; and he would have themſelves to be mindful of them all their days, ſaying, *Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth* (*d*)?

The ſooner you begin in earneſt to ſeek after the LORD, and to give up yourſelves to him, the better ſacrifice is thereby preſented; the ſtrength and vigor of your days, the beſt of your time and capacities are therein devoted to his fear. The leſs Satan will have of your ſervice, and the more CHRIST will have of it; the leſs diſhonor, and the more honor will be brought to him; the fewer offences will be committed againſt him, and the more fruits of righteouſneſs will be brought forth to him. And this cannot but be very peculiarly pleaſing and acceptable in his ſight, who *loves righteouſneſs and hates iniquity*; and will not deſpiſe the work of his own hands. Hence,

II. It is the ordinary courſe of divine grace to be found of early ſeekers.

Obſervation and experience may ſatisfy us, that it is exceeding rare for any to mind religion in earneſt, or to be ſavingly turned to GOD in CHRIST in old age, who have ſat under the Goſpel, and gone careleſly on in impenitence and unbelief all their lives long before. Some few inſtances there may be indeed of ſuch, that ſovereign grace may keep up evidences to the world of its glory. But alas! they are very few, here and there one out of great multi-

(*c*) 2 Kings xxii. 19, 20. (*d*) Jer. iii. 4.

tudes. But instances of this sort bear no proportion to those that seek and find CHRIST in their early days.

It is likewise easy to observe, that, generally speaking, sinners that are brought under the means of grace, or under some new, close, and searching ministrations, that they never enjoyed before; if they have not an early effect upon their hearts, in some few years at most after the providence of GOD has favored them with those means, they never savingly profit by them at all. The chief operations of GOD's grace upon their souls in converting work, is usually in the early days of those new opportunities, or soon after they enjoyed them.

I appeal, for the confirmation of all this, to your own observation, in the instances you are acquainted with. I appeal to the experiences of some among yourselves. And I appeal to the scripture account of the great success of the Gospel, when it *ran and was glorified*, and *great numbers believed and turned to the Lord:* It was soon after the Gospel came to be published among a people, that had not heard it before.

All the churches mentioned in the new testament were chiefly made up of such early converts. And when the Apostles went to any places or people, that at the first hearing of the Gospel universally hardened themselves against it, they looked upon it as a black omen, and as a strong indication, that GOD's elect did not lie among them, that the Gospel would not be received, and that it would be in vain to continue the ministrations of it there.

Thus the Apostle *Paul* took the indication at *Antioch*, and acted according to it, when the *Jews* despised, and resolutely set themselves against the first publications of the Gospel there. *Then* Paul *and* Barnabas *waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: But, seeing*

seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. *And when the* Gentiles *heard this they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (*e*). And when he was at *Rome*, he said to those *Jews*, that rejected the Gospel he brought among them, *expounding and testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of* Moses, *and out of the prophets, from morning till evening, Well spake the Holy Ghost by* Esaias *the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the* Gentiles, *and that they will hear it* (*f*). Accordingly, CHRIST himself, on a particular occasion of this sort, gave an express order to the Apostle, *saying to him, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of* Jerusalem, *for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me* (*g*). And at another time, *He spake to* Paul *in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city* (*h*).

So that, where he hath a special design of grace upon any souls, the usual way and course of that grace is to begin with them betimes, either in the early days of their lives, if they have been brought up under the Gospel, or in the early season of their opportunities of hearing it, or of coming under some new, clear, and impressive ministrations of it. Fact therefore shews, that early seeking him is most remarkably the finding time; and that those who neg-

(*e*) Acts xiii. 46. 48.
(*f*) Acts xxviii. 23—28
(*g*) Acts xxii. 18.
(*h*) Acts xviii. 9, 10.

leſt that time, rarely, if ever, ſeek him afterwards at all, ſo as to find him. It may therefore be ſaid to you, with ſome peculiarity and emphaſis, that are yet young; and to you, that have but lately come under the means of grace, or under ſome new, clearer, and more lively miniſtrations of the Goſpel, than you have been under before, if there are any ſuch among you, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* (*i*). Hence,

III. Early ſeekers have fewer obſtructions to their ſeeking and finding CHRIST, than others have.

The earlier you ſeek him, the fewer provocations there are in you to grieve the holy Spirit in his ſtrivings with you; the leſs danger there is, leſt GOD in his righteous judgment ſhould give you up to the vanity of your own minds, and to the folly, hardneſs, and madneſs of your own corrupt hearts, or ſhould reject your earneſt applications to CHRIST, and to his grace in him at laſt for mercy; the leſs ſtupid and hardened you will ordinarily be in your iniquities; the leſs unyielding to the impreſſions of his grace; the leſs confirmed in the habits of ſin; the leſs ſubjected to the overbearing dominion of it; and the leſs liable to the temptations of Satan, and to the intanglements, ſnares, cares, and troubles of this evil world. And the longer you put off this ſolemn and important work, the more all the oppoſite obſtructions will grow upon you; and the greater difficulty you will find in being reclaimed, and brought off from your wonted and eſtabliſhed courſe in ſin. Hence is that alarming expoſtulation by the prophet, *Can the* Ethiopian *change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil* (*k*).

It

(*i*) Iſa. lv. 6, 7. (*k*) Jer. xiii 23.

It may be said of such in this case, as was said of *Ephraim*; *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not* (*l*). The melancholy symptoms of approaching destruction are upon them, as gray hairs upon the head are manifest tokens that a man is not far from the grave; and yet they are so stupid and secure in sin, that they take no notice of it, and are not concerned in earnest for deliverance from it. And if, while any of you in your younger days neglect seeking CHRIST, death should cut you off, as it doth many in their youth, that will put an early and eternal bar upon you; you are lost, irretrievably lost for ever. But,

IV. There are some peculiar promises to early seekers, over and above all those that are made to others with them.

You have (as was observed before in general) full as much or more encouragement than others, from the promises that are made in an indefinite manner, without restraint to any ages or circumstances of life; such as these that follow. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord* (*m*). *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint* (*n*). *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart* (*o*). *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord* (*p*). And our blessed LORD has added many other encouraging promises in the new testament, such as, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened to you. Come unto*

(*l*) Hos. vii. 9.
(*m*) Prov. viii. 34, 35.
(*n*) Isa. xl. 31.
(*o*) Jer. xxix. 13.
(*p*) Hos. vi. 3.

unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls (*q*). *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. And if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive* (*r*).

These, with many other precious promises of a like nature, some of which have been mentioned before; these, I say, are doubtless, to speak the least, as great encouragements to you that are young, to seek the LORD, as they can be to others of more advanced years.

But besides these, there are peculiar promises to you, in which you are particularly named, and which others have no share in, or not so good and evident a share as you. Such a promise is that gracious and peremptory one in our text, *Those that seek me early shall find me.* What can be a more positive and assuring promise to you; and what can be a greater encouragement to your early seeking him than this? And as other promises in the following verses stand in connection with this, they may be fairly looked upon, as intended in a special manner for you. There CHRIST adds, for the farther encouragement of these early seekers, that they shall find him, and that he is worth their finding. *Riches and honor are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment; that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures* (*s*).

There

(*q*) Matt. v. 6. and vii. 7. and xi. 28, 29.
(*r*) John vi 37 and vii. 37, 38, 39.
(*s*) Prov. viii. 18—21.

There are likewise several other promises in this book, that seem to have a most direct view to young people, under the figure of *Solomon*'s son, particularly in the second chapter, where he says, *My son,—if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God* (*t*). And this he mentions as an effectual guard against the irregular passions and inclinations of young men, and against their being drawn aside and ensnared by women of infamous characters, *who forsake the guide of their youth, and forget the covenant of their God* (*u*).

The children of believing parents have peculiar promises to encourage their faith and hope in their earliest seeking after CHRIST, that they may lay hold on GOD's covenant in him. He hath said to *Abraham*, and to every one *that walks in the steps of the faith of our father* Abraham (*x*), *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee* (*y*). *And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayst live* (*z*). And again, *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.—One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of* Jacob; *and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of* Israel (*a*).

The young offspring of GOD's servants may plead these promises with peculiar advantage; they may hereby be excited to seek with hope, and may be assured, that, if they are helped to avouch the LORD GOD

(*t*) Prov. ii. 1, 3, 4, 5.
(*x*) Rom. iv. 12.
(*z*) Deut. xxx. 6.
(*u*) Prov. ii. 17.
(*y*) Gen. xvii. 7.
(*a*) Isa. xliv. 3, 5.

God of their parents for their God, he will without fail be found of them.

He hath said, for the relief of fatherless children under their oppressions, *If they cry at all unto me, I will hear their cry* (*b*). And our dear Lord hath distinguished early seekers of him with a promise, saying, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (*c*): That is, the kingdom of God, and all other necessary things. And the exceeding delightful promises you have toward the close of *Psal.* xcii. are most properly to be understood as relating to persons that come in to the Lord in their younger days. For they are promises to the righteous, of continuing their begun grace and fruitfulness, till they arrive at old age, which supposes them not to be advanced to that age when they first became righteous. For it is there said, *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in* Lebanon. *Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright* (*d*).

But on the other hand, threatnings instead of promises belong to those, that in their younger days account God's work a burden, that cast off his covenant, and choose to be the servants of sin rather than the servants of Christ; or that intend to put him off with the decrepit services of old age, when they can no longer taste the pleasures, or pursue the business of this life; when their strength is wasted, and their spirits are enfeebled by sickness and infirmities; when their lives are good for nothing, and just ready to expire. Such sinners may think they hear God's rebuke to them, in the language of his expostulations by the prophet: *Ye said, Behold, what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord*

(*b*) Exod. xxii. 23. (*c*) Matt. vi 33.
(*d*) Psal. xcii. 12—15.

Lord of hoſts; *and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the ſick*; *thus ye brought an offering: Should I accept this of your hands? ſaith the Lord. But curſed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and ſacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing* (*e*).

Suppoſe in the very laſt decline, and finiſhing period of a life ſpent in rebellions, you were to *offer* your ſervice *to your governor, would he be pleaſed with you, or accept your perſon* (*f*)? Would he not rather diſdain your mockery, and reject you with indignation? How much more muſt the great God think himſelf affronted, and reſent the affront? Where has he ever promiſed that he would accept of ſuch a ridiculous offering? And what can you expect but a curſe at his hands? O how have early ſeekers the advantage of ſuch! All the promiſes ſtand in favor to them; and a bleſſing inſtead of a curſe is every where pronounced upon them.

Object. But poſſibly ſome of you may object, that God has ſaid of ſome, that *they ſhall ſeek him early, but ſhall not find him* (*g*).

Anſw. To this I anſwer, that the ſeeking him early there ſpoken of, does not mean early with reſpect to the time of life, or day of grace; but early, with reſpect to the time of their *deſtruction coming upon them* (mentioned in the foregoing verſe) for their wilful neglects and continued abuſes of God's gracious calls to them. When his vengeance begins to be finally executed upon them, and they begin to feel themſelves ſinking under the load of his dreadful and righteous wrath; then, immediately upon this, early, or ſoon after this, they in all their agonies will ſeek him, *ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.* But alas! the day of grace will then be over. *The Door will then be ſhut; and Chriſt will ſay unto them, I know you not whence you are* (*h*). Then that early will

(*e*) Mal. i. 13, 14. (*f*) ver. 8. (*g*) Prov. i. 28.
(*h*) Luke xiii. 25.

will be too late to find him. The God whom they all along rejected before, will reject them then. And this you may plainly see to be the meaning of the passage, from whence this objection is taken, if you read it together with what goes before and after it, which stands thus. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel: They despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices* (*i*). A few reflections, for the improvement of all this, shall close the whole discourse.

Application. I. Let such young people take conviction of their sin and folly, who early seek those things that hinder their early seeking Christ.

This is the way of too many; instead of early seeking Christ, they seek such things as keep them off, and turn them aside from seeking him. This is the guilty and dangerous case of those of you that early seek irreligious and insnaring, loose and vain companions, that have no fear of God before their eyes, that make a jest of religion, and make a mock of sin. This is the case of those of you, that early seek public houses to drink the cup of the drunkard, to tipple with them, *that are mighty to drink wine, and follow strong drink, till it inflame them* (*k*); and that early seek to waste your time, reputation, money and consciences, to contract bad habits, to abuse yourselves, and ruin your own souls for ever. And this is the case of those of you, that early seek your pleasures

(*i*) Prov. i. 24—31. (*k*) Isa. v. 11, 22.

pleasures and diversions, games, sports and jollity; that early seek some or all of these, under the notion or pretence of innocent pastimes, till you run into all irregular practices, and are put upon shifts and falshoods, tricking and deceits, to cover your wickedness, or to hide yourselves from reproof and shame, and to cheat your own consciences and friends.

These extinguish all serious thoughts about CHRIST and religion, about the eternal world, and your own immortal souls. These have been the utter ruin of many a sober promising youth: And I may appeal to those of you, if there are any such here present, who have ever had any serious thoughtfulness about CHRIST and your own souls, and have afterwards taken these courses; whether the more you have sought such company, pleasures, and diversions, you have not sought CHRIST less, till, it may be, former convictions have been stifled, and you have gone on more securely in the ways of sin, and in neglects of your own salvation, than in times past you dared to do. O dreadful event! Have a care: If this is any of your case, you are in the high road to eternal destruction. And if GOD do not mercifully awaken you, and turn you from it now, while you are young, you are in the greatest danger of being hardened in it, and of perishing with a vengeance.

II. Let young ones go home, and pray over the encouragements they have heard to those that seek CHRIST early, till they find them effectual, by his grace, to engage them in seeking him early, and without delay.

Go, and tell him that thou art come by his assistance to make him thy early choice, and to make a full and free surrender of thyself to him. Plead the encouragements he hath given to early seekers; and beg of him to enable thee to plead them in faith. Tell him thou hast heard, that such are most pleasing to him, and that he uses to be found of them.

Plead

Plead any promises, that suit thy case, and especially those that are made to early seekers. And under a sense of all thy guilt, vileness and unworthiness, as a child of wrath by nature, and a child of disobedience by practice, throw thyself at his feet for mercy, begging of him to have compassion upon thee, to pardon thy sins, and to make an effectual change upon thy heart now, while it is young and tender, and before thou art encompassed with those intanglements, that may hereafter hinder thy seeking, and finding him. Give him no rest, but follow him time after time, as a perishing creature, with earnest entreaties and prayers, for mercy, and with a humble dependence on his gracious promises, till thou findest him to thy own salvation.

III. Let those of you, that have been helped to seek him early, still go on to seek him in all his ways.

Then shalt thou know the Lord, if thou followest on to know him (*l*). If thy heart is opened to receive him, as he is freely offered to thee in the Gospel, thou hast found him; he is thine. And when thou hast good hope through grace, that thou hast begun to find him, take his yoke still farther upon thee, and give up thyself to him in a church-state, according to his appointment and command. Be early in this way of seeking him, that thou mayst have thy interest in him still farther confirmed to thee, and his bonds still farther fastened upon thee at his table; that all may be ratified and sealed up to thy conscience there; and that thou mayst come under his most peculiar presence and blessing, and under the most solemn engagements to be the LORD's.

Many young persons, whose hearts have been brought over to CHRIST in their early days, have slipt the time of their first love, without joining to any church of CHRIST, and have found it much harder work afterwards, than it would have been before;

(*l*) Hos. vi. 3.

before; and, it may be, have gone on to a ſinful neglect of the important duty all their lives long. They ſuffer great loſs and trouble in their own ſouls thereby; are expoſed to greater temptations, darkneſs, wounds, and dangers; and remain much more unſettled, unfruitful, and uncomfortable in themſelves, and leſs honorable in their profeſſion of CHRIST, and in the avowed teſtimony they ought to bear to his glorious name, than they otherwiſe might have been. And ſometimes weak, though true believers, have found their reflections upon a continued neglect of this duty, have turned with a ſting upon their conſciences, and a cloud upon their hopes, when they came to die.

If therefore there are any among you, who have been inclined and enabled by divine grace to ſeek early after CHRIST, and yet have not thoroughly given up yourſelves to him in his way, that you *may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameleſs* (*m*). Remember, the promiſe is, that *thoſe that be planted in the houſe of the Lord, ſhall floriſh in the courts of our God: They ſhall ſtill bring forth fruit in old age: They ſhall be fat and floriſhing* (*n*). And GOD's uprightneſs is engaged to fulfil his promiſes to them, that in this way are upright with him. But,

IV. Let not older ſinners think themſelves excluded from all hope.

Though in your early days you have neglected ſeeking after CHRIST, and therefore have leſs encouragement to your hopes of finding him now, than younger ſinners have: Yet do not caſt off all hope of ſucceſs in ſeeking him, though at the eleventh hour. Sovereign grace may ſtill reach even you. And if GOD now gives you a heart to repent of your former folly and wickedneſs, and under deep humblings of ſoul before him for it, to ſeek CHRIST earneſtly by faith now, the door of hope is not yet

(*m*) Luke i. 6. (*n*) Pſal. xcii. 12—15.

utterly ſhut againſt you. For it is ſaid, without exception of ages, concerning *all that come to him, he will in no wiſe caſt them out.* And *whoſoever believes in him ſhall not periſh, but have everlaſting life* (*o*). If now at length thou findeſt thy heart to be thoroughly engaged to CHRIST, the wonders of his rich and ſovereign grace have reached thee, and none of thy former iniquities or neglects ſhall be mentioned to thee. This will ſhew that it is not yet too late even for thee; and nothing but this can take off the threatning ſymptoms that are found upon thee.

To conclude therefore, whatever your age or condition is, you may think you this day hear CHRIST ſaying to you, *Behold, I ſtand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will ſup with him, and he with me* (*p*).

(*o*) John vi. 37. and iii. 16. (*p*) Rev. iii. 20.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

And yet there is Room, explained and applied, particularly to Young People.

Preached at *Little St Hellen*'s, *May* 19, 1730.

LUKE XIV. 22.

——— *And yet there is room.*

THESE words are part of the parable of the great supper, which is very much akin to that of the marriage of the king's son, in *Matt.* xxii. The principal view in both is to illustrate the rich and abounding grace of GOD in CHRIST, as proposed in the Gospel, first to sinners of the *Jews* and then of the *Gentiles*, with the different treatment it met with from them severally.

The parable, to which our text belongs, is a borrowed representation of GOD's free and bounteous grace, from the generosity of a *certain man*, who it is supposed kept open house, and *made a great supper* (which was usually the principal meal in those days) *and bad many*, ver. 16. *At supper-time he sent his servant*, who in this parable represents the ministers of the Gospel. Though they are many, their busi-

neſs is as much the ſame, as if they were but one: In heart and deſign they ought to be but one, and all ſhould join in the ſame errand that this ſervant went on, *ſaying to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready*, ver. 17. The *Jews* were bidden beforehand in the miniſtry of the prophets and of *John* the baptiſt, who had ſpoke of the plenteous proviſions GOD would make by JESUS CHRIST in the Goſpel, for the ſalvation of all ſorts of ſinners. Theſe had been ſet out under the figure of a feaſt in the old teſtament, particularly in that remarkable prophecy of the Meſſiah's days, where it is ſaid, *The Lord of hoſts ſhall make unto all people a feaſt of fat things, a feaſt of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined* (*q*). And when our LORD came in the fleſh, and finiſhed the work his Father gave him to do, a meſſage was ſent in the Goſpel-miniſtry to call in the gueſts, and to tell them that the time of making this feaſt was then come, and every thing was prepared for their entertainment.

GOD's gracious promiſe of the Savior is now accompliſhed; the work of redemption is now finiſhed; the Goſpel-revelation is now fully made; and the holy Spirit is now at hand, to attend its miniſtrations, and crown them with ſucceſs. *All things are now ready*, every thing relating to them is now perfected; they are as ready as ever they will be, and as ready as they can be deſired to be: Now is the time to come in, now is the critical time; now, or never.

Three ſeaſons are mentioned, in which this meſſage was ſent to different ſorts of perſons. By the firſt, which is ſpoken of in this verſe, is ſignified, as is moſt generally thought, the propoſal of the Goſpel to the *Jews* at *Jeruſalem*, and in the land of *Judea*: And by the ſecond, the propoſal of it to the *Jews* of the diſperſion, who were as vagrants *in the ſtreets and lanes*

(*q*) Iſa. xxv. 6.

lanes of the city, ver. 21. Or, as others suppose, by the first is signified, the proposal of it to the scribes and pharisees; and by the second, to publicans and sinners, to persons of meaner and more infamous characters, who are described by *the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind*, ver. 21. These were objects unquestionably miserable and unlovely in themselves, and at the farthest distance from all pretences of ever making GOD any amends; and they were such objects, as our LORD had recommended to our charitable bounty and compassion under the very same characters, saying, ver. 13, 14. *When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind—for they cannot recompense thee.* The third time of sending this message, relates to the proposal of the Gospel to the *Gentiles*, after it had been rejected by the *Jews*, or entertained but by few among them; the poor out-casts that, like beggars and strangers from the commonwealth of *Israel*, lay in the *highways and hedges*, were to be *compelled to come in*, ver. 23. *i. e.* all kind, free, and importunate invitations were to be given them, and all possible arguments to be used with them, to embrace CHRIST and the Gospel. The nature of compelling to a feast, supposes the compulsion to be of this sort, and not by outward force; they were to be *drawn with cords of a man, with bands of love* (*r*). By these, they were to be made a *willing people in the day of God's power* (*s*); and they were to be *constrained by the love of Christ*, till his *house should be filled*, ver. 28.

As to the first of these invitations, it is said, *They all with one consent began to make excuse*, ver. 18. The generality of them *made light of it, and they would not come* (*t*). Their excuses were various; each of them had a different one for himself, but they all agreed to desire to be excused, ver. 18—20. The riches, cares, and pleasures of this world, furnished out their

(*r*) Hos. xi. 4.
(*s*) Psal. cx 3.
(*t*) Matt. xxii. 3, 5.

arguments of excuſe, as they do among multitudes at this day; one or other of theſe engaged their hearts, and kept them off from CHRIST, according to what is ſaid of the thorny-ground-hearers, *Mark* iv. 19. Well, *the ſervant came and ſhewed his Lord theſe things*, i. e. he made a juſt report of them to him, ver. 21. Miniſters muſt be faithful in their account to GOD, as well as in their work with men. It is grievous to labor in vain, and to complain to the LORD that it is in vain; and yet they muſt be faithful in both. They *watch for your ſouls, as thoſe that muſt give an account*; and are deſirous that they may do it with *joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable to you* (*u*): You will have the worſt of it; the fault and ruin is yours, and not theirs; your blood will be on your own heads; they ſtand clear of it, and deliver their own ſouls from it, while they are faithful in their work; yea, *they are unto God a ſweet ſavor in Chriſt, in them that are ſaved, and in them that periſh* (*x*). They are however, grieved at your ſin and folly, and their great LORD and Maſter is offended at it; *the maſter of the houſe was angry*, ver. 21. His abuſed merciful kindneſs turned into juſt reſentment: And yet, angry as he was with them, that had refuſed his gracious overtures, he ſent his ſervant again to others ſtill more unlikely, and in human account more unworthy, and ſaid to him, *Go out quickly into the ſtreets and lanes of the city.* Make haſte, let no time be loſt; my ſupper muſt not be ſpoiled, and my compaſſions move toward the miſerable and neceſſitous: *Go out quickly, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*, ver. 21. As if he ſhould ſay, "There is no reſpect of perſons "with me; the meaneſt ſhall be as welcome to me, "as perſons of the greateſt figure in the world; and "I am as willing to receive the moſt abominable "ſinners, as thoſe of fairer characters. The poor "ſhall have the *Goſpel preached to them*; for *has not* "*God*

(*u*) Heb. xiii. 17. (*x*) 2 Cor. ii. 15.

" *God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and* " *heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them* " *that love him* (*y*). And *publicans and harlots will* " *believe, and go into the kingdom of God before* (*z*) " many others of name and character."

If the LORD of the feast thinks fit that such as these should be invited and brought in, the servant readily goes on his errand to them, and returns his account, saying, *Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room*, ver. 22. Some of these came in according to the command, as the words intimate, and as scripture records assure us; but there were not enow to answer the generous provisions, and the gracious designs of the master, or the earnest desire and hopes of the servant; he therefore puts in a word for farther employment in his master's work, and for farther kindness to be shewn to others; he pleads with his LORD, and would have it known to the world, that *yet there is room.*

What is here said with an immediate reference to the state of things at that time between the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, is fairly applicable, in a more general view, to the whole state of the Gospel-dispensation through all ages, wherever GOD orders his Gospel to be preached. The ministers of CHRIST mourn to see so few come in to GOD through him; but they rejoice that there are any, and that there is room for more. While they lament that there are but few, they plead with GOD, and proclaim abroad among men, that there may still be more. They are earnestly desirous of their master's honor, of the advancement of true religion and godliness, and of the good of souls; and therefore they humbly move, that they may still go on with their work, and they encourage themselves and others with this thought, that *yet there is room.*

While you hear these words repeated, some of you may be ready to ask the following questions upon

(*y*) Jam. ii. 5. (*z*) Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

upon them, *viz.* For what is there room? For whom is there room? Where is there room? And how is it to be underſtood, that *yet there is room?*

My preſent buſineſs ſhall be, to return an anſwer to theſe queſtions, in the fear of GOD, with an application of the whole, particularly to young people.

The firſt of theſe queſtions is,

Queſtion I. For what is there room?

Anſwer. There is room for the entertainment of gueſts at the Goſpel-feaſt, that they may be partakers of CHRIST, and of all the privileges of his houſe and kingdom. Theſe, incluſive of all the bleſſings of grace and glory, are ſignified by the Goſpel-ſupper in this parable, and by the marriage-feaſt in the other of like import.

There is room to return to GOD through CHRIST, and to obtain favor with him; room for faith in the Redeemer of loſt ſinners, for repentance toward GOD, and for hope of eternal life. There is room to *taſte and ſee that the Lord is good* (*a*); to feed by faith on CHRIST, as the *bread of life, which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die eternally* (*b*); and to partake of the celeſtial banquet, or of all the bleſſedneſs belonging to thoſe, that ſhall *eat bread in the kingdom of God*, which had been mentioned, ver. 15. and gave occaſion to this parable. There is room for pardon and peace, for ſafety and comfort, for juſtification, adoption, and ſanctification, for communion with GOD in CHRIST, and for joy in the Holy Ghoſt, for deliverance from wrath, and for admiſſion to heavenly bleſſedneſs. There is room for the moſt agreeable and delightful entertainment and improvement of all the faculties of a reaſonable and immortal ſoul in this life, and for its eternal ſatisfaction, exaltation, and rapture in the next: For *eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God*

(*a*) Pſalm xxxiv. 8. (*b*) John vi. 48, 50.

God hath prepared for them that love him (*c*). This brings to the second question, which is,

Quest. II. For whom is there room?

Answ. There is room for sinners, who are indigent, miserable, and unworthy in themselves; who have forfeited all favor, exposed themselves to divine wrath, and might justly have been shut out from the kingdom of GOD for ever.

There is room for all the chosen of GOD among them, for whom the *kingdom was prepared from the foundation of the world* (*d*): And *it shall be given to them*, saith our blessed LORD, *for whom it is prepared of my Father* (*e*). But who these are, is a secret known to GOD only; and not to be known, or pried into by any of us, till events declare it: For *secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever* (*f*).

If any go into puzzling questions about themselves or others, whether they are GOD's elect, or whether their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, or not, before it appears with proper evidence by what is written in their hearts, and legible in their lives; it may be said to such, as the angel said to *Manoah*, *Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret* (*g*)? This *secret of the Lord is* only *with them that fear him*, when he comes to *shew them his covenant* (*h*); and then they know it not with relation to others, but only to themselves. *The Lord knows them that are his* (*i*) before, as well as after they are *called according to his purpose* (*k*); but ministers and christians cannot know it of others; and if any would know it for himself, *Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*

Hence this secret of the LORD is not, cannot be the rule of his servants in inviting, or of any in coming

(*c*) 1 Cor. ii. 9. (*d*) Matt. xxv. 34. (*e*) chap. xx. 23.
(*f*) Deut. xxix. 29. (*g*) Judg. xiii. 18. (*h*) Ps. xxv. 14.
(*i*) 2 Tim. ii. 19 (*k*) Rom. viii. 28.

coming to the Gospel-feast. It only encourages the hopes of the one and the other, that GOD will attend his own message with a gracious influence, and will honor it with success. Were it not for this purpose of grace, such is the depravity, darkness, impotence, obstinacy and enmity of human nature in its fallen state, that it would be uncertain whether any one would come in, or rather certain that none would; for *no man*, says our blessed Savior, *can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him* (*l*): But this gives us a security that the labors of his servants shall not be in vain, and that there are some, who certainly shall be brought in: And this leaves as much room for one sinner, as for another, to try for entrance; and leaves room for every sinner to hope for himself, that he may be one, who in the use of the means of GOD's own appointment shall obtain admission. Hence our LORD speaks both of the certainty of their coming, who are given to him by the Father, and of the kind reception, which all that come shall meet with: *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out* (*m*). The first is a private security that some shall come to him; and the second, an open assurance that none that come shall be rejected. The first is his rule to himself in bringing them in; and the second, his rule toward them in giving, and theirs toward him in seeking, and finding acceptance.

Our rule therefore of judging for whom there is room; the rule of ministers preaching, and of sinners hearing, that there is room, lies in the open declarations of the Gospel concerning the known characters of those, that are invited to come in, and that shall find acceptance. According to this rule, there is room for sinners of human race, in distinction from the fallen angels; *For verily* the captain of our salvation *took not on him the nature of angels; but the seed of*

(*l*) John vi. 44. (*m*) Ibid. 37.

of Abraham (*n*). And *after that we were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures*, &c. *the kindneſs and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteouſneſs which we have done, but according to his mercy he ſaved us by the waſhing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt* (*o*).

There is room for ſinners of all nations, wherever the Goſpel comes; for ſinners of the *Gentiles* as well as of the *Jews*; for ſinners of *European* nations, and of *Great Britain* among them, as well as for ſinners of *Aſiatic* countries, where the Goſpel was firſt preached among the *Gentiles*. There is room for ſinners of all ranks and degrees, and of all characters in the moral, civil, and natural life; for younger and older ſinners; for greater and leſſer ſinners; for publicans and harlots, as well as for ſcribes and phariſees; for perſons of low and deſpicable characters, with regard to intellectual attainments, worldly circumſtances, or outward form and ſhape, as well as for perſons of name and figure, or of agreeable and lovely aſpect in the eyes of men. There is room for ſuch as might be thought of all others the moſt unlikely, the moſt miſerable, the moſt unlovely, and the moſt unworthy, even for *the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind*, as they are repreſented in the verſe before our text. CHRIST *came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt*: He *came not to call the righteous but ſinners to repentance*. And *this is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners* (*p*), even the *chief* of ſinners.

There is room for ſinners of all theſe characters to come to CHRIST, and for the entertainment of every one of them, that comes to him, or that believes in him, according to the gracious diſcoveries he has made of himſelf in the Goſpel: Hence he ſays, *I am*

(*n*) Heb. ii. 16. (*o*) Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5,
(*p*) 1 Tim. i. 15.

am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (*q*). There is room for any soul that, in its distress, hungers and thirsts for spiritual blessings, and applies to CHRIST, and the grace of GOD in him for relief. There is room for the most obnoxious and unworthy, the most helpless and discouraged sinner, that, under a penitent sense of his own want and unworthiness, is heartily concerned about deliverance from sin and wrath, about GOD's favor and salvation, and in that concern seeks after the mercy of GOD in CHRIST, believes in him, and turns from his iniquities to GOD through him: *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled* (*r*). *If any man thirst*, says the dear and generous Savior, *let him come unto me and drink* (*s*). And, *Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (*t*). How fitly does all this correspond to the prophetic language of Gospel-days! *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.——Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of* David. *Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people* (*u*). And as soon as GOD had said to him, *Behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee*; it is immediately added in the next verses, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* (*x*).

This may lead us to the next question, which is,

Quest.

(*q*) John vi. 35.
(*s*) John vii. 37.
(*u*) Isa. lv. 1—4.
(*r*) Matt. v. 6.
(*t*) Matt. xi. 28.
(*x*) Ibid. 5, 6, 7.

Queſt. III. Where is there room?

Anſw. There is room every where, and in every reſpect, that can be reaſonably hoped for, or deſired, or that is any way ſuited to give ſinners good entertainment. *Room* in our text is a metaphorical term, ſuitable to the nature of the parable, and it relates to the entertainment of ſouls. And therefore the queſtion, Where is there room? is not to be underſtood ſo much with regard to place, as to perſons and things, with whom, and in which, the entertainment is to be found. And you may take ſome account of this in the following particulars.

1. There is room in the heart of God.

He is as willing to ſave returning ſinners, as any ſuch can be to be ſaved by him.

There is room in the heart of God the Father for them. We have a lively repreſentation of this in the parable of the prodigal: Though he had run into all extravagances, into the utmoſt diſobedience, luxury and riot, and had reduced himſelf to the laſt extremity; yet as ſoon as he came to himſelf, and reflected upon his own periſhing ſtate, and the plenteous proviſions of his father's houſe, and thought of going with humble confeſſion of his ſins, and throwing himſelf at his feet for mercy, *whilſt he was yet a great way off, his father ſaw him, and had compaſſion* (*y*); his bowels moved towards him, and there was room in his heart to receive him. The Lord our God, is a God that *delighteth in mercy, and hath no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner:* It is much more agreeable to his gracious nature and holy will, that he ſhould return and live, than that he ſhould go on in his treſpaſſes and die. *He taketh pleaſure in them that fear him, in thoſe that hope in his mercy* (*z*).

There is likewiſe room in the heart of God the Son for them. His heart ſtands ſo well affected towards their ſalvation, that his delights have been from everlaſting among the ſons of men. In purſuit

(*y*) Luke xv. 17—20. (*z*) Pſal. cxlvii. 11.

ſuit of thoſe delights, he came into our world to aſſume a human life, and to ſpend and lay it down for their ſalvation; and nothing can be more pleaſing to him, than to receive and ſave every ſoul that comes to him: He therein *ſees of the travel of his ſoul, and is ſatisfied; and the pleaſure of the Lord proſpers in his hand* (*a*).

And there is room in the heart of God the Spirit for them. All that he ſpeaks to them in his word, and in the miniſtry of it without, and all that he ſecretly ſuggeſts to their ſouls within; all his inſtructions to them, and ſtrivings with them, ſpeak his readineſs to encourage and aſſiſt them. *The Spirit ſaith, Come; and let him that is athirſt, come: And whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely* (*b*). Hence,

2. There is room in the proviſions of divine grace. God the Father has prepared the bleſſings of grace and glory, in the eternal counſels and free purpoſes of his will; and has given his only begotten Son to make a purchaſe of them by his own obedience and ſufferings, in the room and ſtead of ſinners, that he might give them with honor, in a way of righteouſneſs and grace: For *in the fulneſs of time God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of ſons* (*c*). The eternal Son of God has already come to do his Father's will, and *given his life a ranſom for many* (*d*). He *has redeemed them from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for them; that the bleſſing of* Abraham *might come on the* Gentiles *through Jeſus Chriſt; that we might receive the promiſe of the Spirit through faith* (*e*). All the riches of the eternal inheritance are treaſured up in him, as the ſecond *Adam*, and public head of all his ſeed, and are ſecured in him for them. All things are now prepared for the holy Spirit's coming from the

(*a*) Iſa. liii. 10, 11. (*b*) Rev. xxii. 17. (*c*) Gal. iv. 4, 5.
(*d*) Matt. xx. 28. (*e*) Gal. iii. 13, 14.

the Father and Son to reveal, and apply the designed and purchased benefits. He is at hand to *glorify them, by taking of their things, and shewing them to us.* And the new covenant of GOD's grace is now fully established by the blood of CHRIST, as a divine charter, in which the blessed GOD consigns over all these benefits to every one that believes, or that comes to him through a Redeemer.

These provisions are all bounteous and free; the provisions of a GOD, that delights to exercise loving kindness in the earth, and *will supply all* the believer's *wants, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (*f*). There is enough in them to answer every exigence, to satisfy every desire, and to fill up every capacity of enjoyment. They are so full and free, that there is as much room for the entertainment of myriads, as there is for any one, if but that one were to be admitted to the whole; and as much room for the vilest, as for the least of sinners. Hence,

3. There is room in the encouragements of the Gospel.

All that you have already heard, with abundance more, which our time will not allow us to recite, is discovered in the Gospel, to open a door of hope to sinners, and to assure them that there is room for them to put in for mercy. Its doctrines relating to the pardon, acceptance, and salvation of all that believe in JESUS, and turn from their iniquities to GOD through him, are the true and faithful sayings of one that cannot lie. Its invitations are free, and its promises sure; *Come, for all things are now ready.* The gracious design of CHRIST's saving office, as it is opened in the Gospel, takes off all pretences as if he would turn away any, that see their need of him, and are willing to be saved by him. What this Gospel tells us he has done in pursuit of this design, leaves no room to doubt, but that he will readily entertain every one, that is willing to have salvation in

(*f*) Phil. iv. 19.

in his own way. And the many instances of his grace to persons in the same circumstances, in as bad, or worse than any of yours, give the highest encouragement to you. What is the language of all this, but that there is room for you? You are invited and encouraged to come, and it is no presumption for any of you to do it, with hopes of finding a free and merciful, a kind and gracious reception. *Behold*, saith CHRIST, *I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me* (*g*). Hence,

4. There is room in GOD's house.

He has a large house, as well as plentiful provisions; and he that can find room in his own heart to entertain CHRIST, shall find room in his Father's house, to be entertained by him. The household of faith has no limits whilst any are coming in; it widens as they come. There is room for them all, be they ever so many; and all that belong to that household are ready to receive them.

The churches of CHRIST are desirous of their company; they bid them welcome, and rejoice to have them come, and take their places among them; *The bride saith, Come; and he that heareth saith, Come* (*h*). The ministers of CHRIST rejoice to bring them in; they *travel* as it were *in birth with them, till Christ be formed in them* (*i*). They take pleasure to do their LORD's errand, saying, *Come, for all things are now ready*; and they look upon all that come, as *their glory, and their joy* (*k*). And all the people of GOD say, *Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of* Jacob, *and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths* (*l*), &c. All religious friends and neighbours, relations and acquaintance, will rejoice when a lost sheep is found, and when a wandering prodigal is brought home (*m*). Yea, all true believers, though they were

(*g*) Rev. iii. 20. (*h*) Rev. xxii. 17. (*i*) Gal. iv. 19.
(*k*) 1 Thes. ii. 20. (*l*) Isa. ii. 3. (*m*) Luke xv. 5, 6, 24.

were ſtrangers and enemies to them before, will glorify GOD when they hear, that *he has granted to them repentance unto life* (*n*). The united language of all theſe is, like that of *Laban* to *Abraham*'s ſervant, *Come in, thou bleſſed of the Lord, wherefore ſtandeſt thou without* (*o*)? Here is room within, proviſion enough in GOD's houſe to entertain you, and room enough in his word and ordinances to receive you, room at the LORD's table and at his ſupper, bread enough and to ſpare; come in, thou bleſſed of the LORD, here is room for you.

There is likewiſe room in the *houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* (*p*). There are manſions enow to receive you; and all the ſaints and angels there are well diſpoſed to every one of you, whom GOD ſhall add to their company. *There is joy in heaven; joy in the preſence of the angels of God, over one ſinner that repenteth* (*q*). Every inſtance of this kind creates freſh pleaſure to all the bleſſed inhabitants there. They rejoice that GOD is owned and glorified in their converſion, that Satan's kingdom is weakned, and the kingdom of CHRIST advanced; that immortal ſouls are ſaved; that this world is ſo far mended, and that their world is in the way of being ſtocked with an increaſe, to aſſiſt their praiſes, and ſhare in their joys. The language of thoſe friendly, benevolent ſpirits to them is, *Come up hither:* And at their arrival to the heavenly palace, they will uſher them in with joy and praiſe; they will croud about them, and bid them welcome to their bliſsful regions, and repeat a ſong of praiſe to him that ſits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. *With gladneſs and rejoicing ſhall they be brought, they ſhall enter into the king's palace* (*r*): And *a voice will come out of the throne, ſaying, Praiſe our God, all ye his ſervants, and ye that fear him, both ſmall*

(*n*) Acts xi. 18.
(*p*) 2 Cor. v. 1.
(*r*) Pſal. xlv. 15.
(*o*) Gen. xxiv. 31.
(*q*) Luke xv. 7, 10.

and great; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready.—Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (*s*). Then *shall the ransomed of the Lord return, and come to* Sion *with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away* (*t*). This brings us to the last question, and that is,

Quest. IV. How is it to be understood that yet there is room?

Answ. The word ἔτι rendered *yet*, properly signifies, still, hitherto, furthermore, and the like. And the plain meaning is, that there still continues to be room; but it will not always be so.

1. There still continues to be room.

The servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. The command of preaching the Gospel, and calling sinners to return to God through Christ for all salvation, had been executed with various events. To some, it had been a savor of life unto life; and to others, of death unto death: Many had rejected it, and others had been helped to comply with it; but whether the Gospel has been rejected or received by them that have heard it, still there is room. The door of mercy is not yet shut; and the time of God's patience is not yet expired: As long as the Gospel is preached, and his Spirit is striving with any souls that sit under it, still there is room.

Though many have slighted it, and with one consent excused themselves from embracing it, and God might justly thereupon have put a stop to his commission, and not exposed his grace to farther contempt and abuse among the sons of men; yet there are many to be brought in, and still there is room. Such is his infinite patience and forbearance, and such are his free and bounteous designs of mercy and

(*s*) Rev. xix. 5, 7, 9. (*t*) Isa. xxxv. 10.

and grace ſtill, that the refuſals of others, be they ever ſo many, ſhall be no bar or hindrance to any ſoul whatever, that is willing to come in. The guilt of others ſhall not be imputed to them, or turned into an argument againſt them.

And as to thoſe that have hitherto rejected the counſel of GOD againſt themſelves, there is yet room even for them to obtain mercy, if now, after they *have ſaid we will not go, they repent and go* (*u*). Yea, there is yet room for ſuch as have gone the greateſt lengths in wickedneſs, that *have ſpoken and done evil things as they could* (*x*); and even for backſliders, that have grievouſly revolted from former profeſſions, convictions, and covenant-obligations: They may ſtill *cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth* (*y*). And with reſpect to ſuch as theſe he ſays, *Go, and proclaim theſe words toward the north, and ſay, Return thou backſliding* Iſrael, *and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, ſaith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou haſt tranſgreſſed againſt the Lord thy God,—and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to* Zion (*z*). Though there are ſuch difficulties in the way of their reception, that GOD expreſſes himſelf as if he were in a ſtrait about them, ſaying, *How ſhall I put thee among the children?* &c. Yet his matchleſs grace *deviſes means, that his baniſhed may not be expelled* for ever; and ſays of ſuch as theſe, *Thou ſhalt call me, My father, and ſhalt not turn away from me* (*a*).

On the other hand, though there are many that have come in, and are already partakers of the bleſſings of grace and glory, there is yet room for more. Theſe are not all that GOD has deſigns of mercy for; the whole number of his elect is not yet brought in; the plentiful proviſions he has made are not yet

(*u*) Matt. xxi. 29.
(*y*) Jer. iii. 4.
(*a*) Ibid. 19.
(*x*) Jer iii. 5.
(*z*) Ibid. 12, 13, 14.

ſpent; his bounteous grace has not yet ſtopt its courſe; the riches of CHRIST are not yet exhauſted; his bleſſed Spirit has not yet retired from among the children of men; and his houſe is not yet full: Still there is room for every one, that now is willing to own and honor GOD, in coming to him through a Redeemer. There is ſtill as much room for them, as if none had been already admitted; and he will go on to receive, as freely as ever, till his houſe be filled. But,

2. There will not always be room.

The LORD was angry with thoſe that excuſed themſelves, and ſaid, *that none of them ſhould taſte of his ſupper*, ver. 21, 24. And a time is coming when his *houſe will be filled*, ver. 23. and there will then be room for no more. Theſe paſſages naturally ſuggeſt to our thoughts, that the day of grace, the ſeaſon of mercy, will not always laſt, it will ſoon be over. There is room now, but it will not be always ſo; it will not be long, it may be but a very little while, before there will aſſuredly be none for thoſe that neglect this great ſalvation now. Many are paſt mercy, paſt all hope and help; they have ſinned away the Goſpel, or ſinned themſelves into a contempt of it; they have ſinned away the ſtrivings of the Spirit with them by the miniſtry of the word; and ſinned themſelves into ſuch hardneſs of heart, that there is no room for their repentance and ſalvation: They have ſinned againſt the light and grace of the Goſpel, till they have provoked the holy GOD to *ſwear in his wrath, that they ſhould never enter into his reſt*. And they have gone on in their rebellion againſt him, and diſobedience to the heavenly call, till they have ſinned themſelves into hell.

One, or all of theſe caſes may ſoon, very ſoon, much ſooner than you are aware of, be the dreadful condition of ſome of you, to whom the Goſpel now ſays, *There is yet room*. Perhaps this is the laſt time it will ſpeak thus to you; it may never ſay it to

to you any more; and you may depend upon it, that if you go on to turn a deaf ear to the grace of the Gospel, to harden your hearts against it, or to excuse yourselves from falling in with it, it will not continue long to speak this inviting language to you. Whatever room there may be for others, there will be none for you. The proposals of a Savior will be no more sent to you; the door of mercy and of hope will be for ever shut and barred against you; and when in the day of his wrath, and of your last distress, you will cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, he will say, *I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity. I never knew you* (*b*). None of you that are now bidden, and persist in refusals, shall ever taste of his supper.

Having thus gone through the answers to these questions, let us now apply all this with a particular reference to young people, for whom this discourse was more immediately designed, and that by way of encouragement and caution.

Use I. By way of encouragement.

If there is still room for all sorts of sinners, you that are yet young, may be assured with advantage, that there is room for you. Considering the horrible slights which many have put upon the Gospel-message year after year, have we not reason to suppose, that God would have recalled it, and sent it to another nation before now, were it not for the sake of the rising generation, and for the gracious design he has to bring in some of them? *It may be they will reverence his Son* (*c*): *It may be they will consider, tho' they be a rebellious house* (*d*), like their fathers; and *it may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to them* (*e*). There may indeed be still a few among older sinners to be brought in; but the chief view of the Gospel-ministry, whilst others go on to pour contempt upon

(*b*) Matt. xxv. 11, 12. and vii. 23. (*c*) Luke xx. 13.
(*d*) Ez. xii. 3. (*e*) Amos v. 15.

it, seems to look in a special manner towards you, and the chief hope of its success lies among you.

You, my young friends, may think you hear the commission renewed to make trial of you, with this encouragement that you *will hear it* (*f*). And, methinks, you should be ready to say, as *Israel* did to *Moses*, *Speak thou to us and we will hear* (*g*). The LORD help you so to say, and so to do. You are now, in a manner, entring upon the time of choice, and setting out for happiness or misery: Behold, what rich provisions are set before you in the Gospel! These of all things else are worth your choosing; they are not only convenient, but necessary for you; they are every way suited to your wants, and to gratify the regular desires of your hearts; they are all delightful and thoroughly satisfying, and you must be inexpressibly miserable, and that for ever, if you miss of them. They are freely provided, and freely given; and they are freely offered to you with more encouragements, and better prospects of success, than to others, who have long refused them. GOD and CHRIST, saints and angels, ministers and christian friends, have their eyes upon you; they, as it were with one consent, bespeak you, saying, *Come*, *for all things are now ready*, and *still there is room*. Nothing can be more agreeable to them, than to see you flocking in; and they are all ready to encourage you, to help you on in your way, and to embrace you with the tendereſt affection when you come.

If a serious inclination is stirring in any of your souls to accept the invitation, GOD is drawing thee by his Spirit, and he thereby speaks still more directly to thee, saying, *Come*; whoever stands out, do thou come. There is enough in him to pity thy wants, thine infirmities and miseries; to pardon thine unworthiness, to carry thee through all thy difficulties

(*f*) Acts xxviii. 28. (*g*) Ex. xx. 19.

difficulties and discouragements, to secure thee amidst all dangers, and to give thee the desire of thine heart. If thou art willing, he is so, and he it is that has made thee so: And if thou comest, thou wilt meet with as free and friendly an entertainment, as thy own soul can wish for. The great master of the feast will look with pleasure on the young guests round about his table: All his friends and family will bid them heartily welcome; they are desirous of their company, and rejoice to receive them: *The Spirit, and the bride say, Come: Let him that is athirst come: And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely* (*b*).

II. By way of caution, as to three things.

1. Take heed of every kind of refusal.

Though the present language of CHRIST, and of his friends and servants, to young ones is, *Come, for all things are now ready*, and *yet there is room*, thou hast heard it will not be always so. Thy youth, and life, and day of grace, wear off apace; and if thou neglectest the great salvation, hardnest thy heart, excusest thyself, and standest off now, the master of the house will certainly be angry with thee; and his anger may proceed so far, as to pronounce that thou *shalt not taste of his supper*.

Thou canst not put a greater affront upon him, than to put him off: To do this, is to refuse; for it shews a disrelish, and opposes present duty: And every refusal is a reflection upon his authority, as if he were not to be regarded; upon his wisdom, as if he had not made suitable provision, or did not know what is best for thee; and upon his liberality and grace, as if there were not enough to satisfy thee, or he would not admit thee when thou comest at his own free invitation and call. This affront to him rebounds with dreadful force upon thine own head; thou hereby excludest thyself from the blessings of his covenant, and provokest him to exclude thee for

(*b*) Rev. xxii. 17.

One refusal makes way for another, and every one increases thy guilt and danger; thy heart will daily harden through the deceitfulness of sin, and GOD's Spirit may cease to strive with thee, or thou mayst be cut off in the midst of thy youthful impenitence and unbelief, to thy utter confusion. The door of mercy may soon be shut against thee, and the great gulf fixed between heaven and thee, that never can be passed over: And oh! how terrible will it be for thee, to see others of thy friends and acquaintance going into the kingdom of GOD, and to be thyself thrust out, and cast into outer darkness, where will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever! What a doleful change will this make of all the gay pleasures of youth, into all the horror and anguish of advancing, never-ending ages! Take heed therefore of trifling away thy youthful time, and of excusing thyself, while thou art yet young, upon any pretences whatsoever; they are all foolish and wicked, indefensible and destructive.

Perhaps thou imagineſt that it is time enough yet; that it is not genteel to be religious in earneſt; that it is not consistent with the business and pleasures of youth, or not suitable to thy age and company. But oh! consider seriously with thyself, whether thou wilt not think it too soon to go to hell; whether thou art willing to be in the fashion there; whether any business or pleasures can divert thee amidst the torments of that state; or whether thy age and company can afford thee any relief then? But,

2. Take heed of attempting to come in thine own strength.

Young as thou art, thou must be reckoned among *the maimed, the halt, and the blind*, ver. 21. Sin has blinded thy mind, cut off thy strength, and wounded thee throughout: But he that bids thee look unto him, can open thine eyes; and he that says unto thee, Arise, and come, can heal, and strengthen thee to obey him. Let therefore all thy attempts to move towards

towards him be within the circle of his guidance and ſtrength, praying to him, and depending upon him, to *work in thee both to will and to do of his good pleaſure* (*i*). Say unto him, *Draw me, I will run after thee* (*k*). *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned* (*l*). And whilſt he draws, ſee that thou run. Let thy *ſoul follow hard after the Lord*, leaning on *his right hand to ſuſtain thee* (*m*). *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; but ſtrive like one who believes that *no man can come to Chriſt, except the Father, which hath ſent him, draw him*; *and he will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* (*n*). To conclude.

3. Take heed of expecting to be entertained on account of thine own worthineſs, becauſe thou art not ſo old a ſinner as others.

All thy encouragement to expect mercy, more than elder ſinners, lies not in thy deſerving it more than they, but in thy being more in the way of GOD's rich grace, according to his uſual method of communicating it, and in thy having not yet been ſuffered to go the ſame lengths with them to cut off thy hopes of obtaining it, as it is ſet before thee in the Goſpel. The evident ſcope of the parable, which our text bears a part in, ſhews, that the proviſion and invitation is all free, and that all is to be freely given to the poor and needy, the unlovely and unworthy. Goſpel-bleſſings are not ſet to ſale, but propoſed to acceptance, as the free gift of GOD; they are not to be ſold to the rich, but given to the poor, and to them that think themſelves to be ſuch, or whoſe ſenſe, and temper of ſpirit are anſwerable to their circumſtances. *Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (*o*). GOD *fills the hungry with good things, and the rich he ſends empty away* (*p*). Their being made our own, is indeed ſometimes called buying, to ſignify that they are

(*i*) Phil. ii. 13. (*k*) Cant i. 4. (*l*) Jer. xxxi. 18.
(*m*) Pſal. lxiii. 8. (*n*) John vi. 44. (*o*) Matt. v. 3.
(*p*) Luke i. 53.

are worth having at any rate, that care and pains must be taken to obtain them, and that something must be parted with for them: But then to keep up the notion of a free gift, without the least merit of our own, it is at the same time spoken of as a buying, which the *wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked are called to* (*q*); and a *buying without money, and without price* (*r*).

What is it then that we are to part with for them, but our own sins, and self-sufficiency, or vain conceit that we are *rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing* (*s*)? If parting with these for them is to be deemed a price, then they that have most sins, and are most opinionated and self-sufficient, must be thought the most worthy, and the best purchasers, in giving them up for CHRIST and the blessings of his kingdom: And the worse the sinner had been, the greater lengths he had run in self-conceit and vileness, and the longer he had continued in them, the more deserving he must be reckoned of divine mercy, when he parts with them for CHRIST and his righteousness, grace and glory. And if this were the case, then young sinners never could be so worthy of them, as old ones; nor lesser sinners, as the most infamous wretches. But the truth is, one is no more worthy, or has any price to give more than another, they are all purchased ready to their hands, there is no other price to be paid for them, and there needs no other, than the precious blood of CHRIST; whoever is made partaker of them, must have them as the free gift of GOD through him, and alone on his account: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* (*t*).

As ever therefore thou wouldst come, and find acceptance, say unto GOD, *Take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously* (*u*). And, remembering the different

(*q*) Rev. iii. 17, 18. (*r*) Isa. lv. 1. (*s*) Rev. iii. 17.
(*t*) Rom. vi. 23. (*u*) Hos. xiv. 2.

different reception of the pharisee and publican, go thou to him like the publican, *smiting upon thy breast, and saying, God be merciful to me a sinner* (*x*); or in the language of the young prodigal, *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants* (*y*). You know the happy event, how that, *when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him* (*z*).

And if thou, whatsoever thy sins have been, goest to God through Christ with an heart like his, thou, like him, shalt find a father's heart towards thee; thou shalt have the best entertainment, and a hearty welcome; for *yet there is room.*

(*x*) Luke xviii. 18. (*y*) Ibid. xv. 18, 19.
(*z*) Ibid. 20.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

A Religious Education recommended.

Preached at *Pinner's-Hall*, in *Broad-ſtreet*, *March* 13, 1727-8. to the SOCIETY that ſupports the Charity-School in *Horſely-Down*, *Southwark*.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

A Religious education of children is of great importance to the church of CHRIST, to civil government, and to the ſeveral communities to which they ſtand related. It is a happy means, under divine influence, of nurſing up trees of righteouſneſs for the vineyard of the LORD, good ſubjects for the ſtate, and orderly uſeful members for the families and ſocieties, into which the providence of GOD may caſt them. The religion, wiſdom, and happineſs, the probity, virtue, ſobriety, induſtry, and proſperity of the riſing generation are intereſted in it, and very much, under GOD, depend upon it.

Solomon, who was a good man, and the wiſeſt of kings, who well underſtood the intereſts of church and

and ſtate, was fully appriſed of the rich advantage of a good education, and, by the inſpiration of the Almighty, delivered the Holy Ghoſt's and his own ſentiments upon it in our text: In which we have,

Firſt, A duty recommended and enjoined. *Train up a child in the way he ſhould go.* Or, as it might be more juſtly rendered, *Train up a child in his way**.

Secondly, An encouragement or motive to inforce it, which is taken from the great advantage and ſucceſs, that may be hoped for from it. *And when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

Our diſcourſe, by divine aſſiſtance, will turn upon both theſe parts of our text in their order; and then cloſe all with an application. To begin with the firſt of theſe, let us conſider,

Firſt, The duty recommended and enjoined. *Train up a child in his way.*

And here two things offer to our inquiry, *viz.* What it is to train up a child: And what to train him up in his way. Our firſt inquiry is,

I. What it is to train up a child.

A child is put indefinitely for any child or children, whether male or female, high or low, rich or poor, bond or free; or for every young perſon that is under our charge or influence.

The word [נער] tranſlated a child, is uſed with great latitude in ſcripture, and runs through all the dates of infancy, childhood, and youth. And the word [חנך] tranſlated train up, ſignifies to dedicate, initiate, inſtruct, and ſet in order. We may therefore think we hear *Solomon* ſaying in theſe words: "Dedicate your children early to God, and as ſoon "as they are capable of underſtanding, initiate them "in his ways, and continue to inſtruct and order "them for his ſervice, as long as they are under "your care."

Accordingly

* חנך לנער על־פי דרכו

Accordingly *Abraham*'s ſervants are called his *trained ſervants* [חניכיו] (*a*). And as *Abraham* devoted himſelf, and all his to GOD, and commanded his children and his houſhold, that they ſhould keep the way of the LORD; we may ſuppoſe that his ſervants were his *trained ſervants*, not only in civil and military, but alſo in religious affairs. They were his *inſtructed ſervants*, as the margins of ſome Bibles have it. They were early acquainted with the knowledge, and inured to the practice of religion. It was betimes recommended to them, urged and impreſſed by all proper means upon them.

In correſpondence to this general view of the caſe, the training up of children, as it relates to ſuch as are come to years of underſtanding (which is the only ſenſe, in which it may be proper on this occaſion to conſider it) may include the four following things.

1. Good inſtruction.

Religious principles ſhould be early and frequently opened and explained to them, and inculcated upon them, and good advice given them, that they may be directed in their way; that their minds may be filled with light, and their conſciences with a ſenſe of GOD's authority; that they may know themſelves to be accountable creatures to him, may underſtand their dependence upon him, their obligations to him, their forfeitures of his mercies, their obnoxiouſneſs to his wrath, and what bleſſed grounds and encouragements are diſplayed, through JESUS CHRIST in the Goſpel, for their comfortable hopes and expectations from him.

What GOD hath taught us, we ſhould teach them. Hence was his charge to *Iſrael*. *Theſe words, which I command thee this day, ſhall be in thine heart: And thou ſhalt teach them diligently unto thy children* (*b*). Or ſhalt *whet them upon thy children* [ושננתם לבניך] "that is, ſays a judicious commentator, often, earneſtly, and diligently teach them, that they may pierce

(*a*) Gen. xiv. 14. (*b*) Deut. vi. 6, 7.

" pierce the hearts of thy children, to underſtand " and affect them *." *Thou ſhalt talk of them, when thou ſitteſt in thy houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up.* A like charge is repeated in the new teſtament. *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (*c*). How elegantly doth the *Pſalmiſt* repreſent this, as GOD's way of perpetuating the knowledge of himſelf on the earth! *What we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, we will not hide from their children, ſhewing to the generation to come, the praiſes of the Lord, and his ſtrength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he eſtabliſhed a teſtimony in* Jacob, *and appointed a law in* Iſrael, *which he commanded our fathers, that they ſhould make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which ſhould be born; who ſhould riſe and declare them to their children: That they might ſet their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments* (*d*). Accordingly *Solomon* took this method with his children, as his father *David* did with him. *Hear, ye children, the inſtruction of a father, and attend to know underſtanding. For I give you good doctrine. Forſake you not my law. For I was my father's ſon, tender and only beloved in the ſight of my mother. He taught me alſo and ſaid unto me, Let thine heart retain my words; keep my commandments, and live* (*e*). And it was *Timothy*'s great advantage that, probably by the inſtructions of his grandmother *Lois*, and mother *Eunice, from a child he had known the holy ſcriptures, which were able to make him wiſe to ſalvation, through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus* (*f*).

2. Good diſcipline and government.

They

* Vide *Ainſworth* in Loc.

(*c*) Eph. vi. 4. (*d*) Pſal. lxxviii. 3—7.
(*e*) Prov. iv. 1—4. (*f*) 2 Tim. i. 5. and iii. 15.

They must be prudently managed, as well as taught. Their practice and behaviour should be regulated, by those that have authority over them, as well as their minds seasoned with good instructions. *Abraham* commanded, as well as taught his children and household, to keep the way of the LORD. And it was *Eli*'s provoking sin, for which he was self-condemned, and the sorest judgments were intailed upon his house, *that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* See how terribly GOD resented it, 1 *Sam.* iii. 11—14.

Childhood and youth are vanity (*g*): And therefore should be observed with a watchful eye, and governed with a steady hand. The time, diversions, and employments of our young charge; their tempers, manners, and dress; their words and gestures should be under proper restraints, and injunctions, corrections, and encouragements, as occasions offer. Reading the scriptures should fill up a part of their daily time; and all religious orders should run thro' the families where they dwell. The governors of christian families should take up, and see to the performance of *Joshua*'s holy resolution; *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord* (*h*).

And, as ever parents would not blast all the pains they have taken with their children in their younger years; when they would transplant them into other families, particular care ought to be taken to place them where the fear of GOD dwells; to put them under such masters, and match them to such consorts, as may assist, instead of casting a damp upon the good principles, dispositions and manners, to which they have been trained. The inexcusably criminal, and now too customary, mismanagement of professing parents, in the disposal of their sons and daughters, hath evidently been one of the greatest reproaches and banes of religion at this day; and hath given

(*g*) Eccles. xi. 10. (*h*) Josh. xxiv. 15.

given touching occaſions to pour out ſerious complaints and fears, in the language of *Rebeka*, when ſhe ſaid to *Iſaac*, *I am weary of my life, becauſe of the daughters of* Heth: *If* Jacob *take a wife of the daughters of* Heth, *ſuch as theſe, which are of the daughters of the land, what good ſhall my life do me* (*i*)?

3. Good examples.

We ourſelves, difference of ſtations being allowed for, ſhould be expert in the leſſons we would teach them, and practiſe the laudable things we would recommend to them. It ſhould be our daily concern and conſcientious care, through grace, that they may never ſee us do what we order them to avoid, and never ſee us neglect what we order them to do; that our lives may never give the lye to our inſtructions, and we may never do them more harm by our example, than we can be ſuppoſed to do them good by our precepts.

Examples make things familiar, paint them out in an obvious and ſtriking light, or rather ſet the originals themſelves before the eye, prove them to be practicable, perſuade more powerfully than naked arguments, and inſenſibly mould one into their likeneſs: And if the examples are good, they throw a luſtre upon precepts, and allure to a happy imitation. *He that walketh with wiſe men ſhall be wiſe; but a companion of fools ſhall be deſtroyed* (*k*). Hence was *David*'s prudent and pious reſolve, God aſſiſting, to beautify and inforce his counſel and precepts by by his own example. *I will behave myſelf wiſely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me! I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart. I will ſet no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aſide, it ſhall not cleave to me* (*l*).

4. Fervent prayer.

The beſt inſtructions, diſcipline, and examples will be ineffectual to their deſired end, without a

(*i*) Gen. xxvii. 46.
(*k*) Prov. xiii. 20.
(*l*) Pſal. ci. 2, 3.

ſpecial bleſſing from GOD upon them. We ſhould therefore commend our children to his grace in CHRIST, and continually bring them in our prayers to him, that our labor with them may not be in vain; that a divine energy may ſet all home upon their hearts, and make ſuch a thorough effectual change there, as ſhall ſpread its amiable beauties through their lives.

O how earneſtly ſhould we wreſtle with GOD for them, that CHRIST may be formed in them, and that they may live in his ſight! as *Abraham* pleaded for *Iſhmael* (*m*). And how ſhould the heads of chriſtian families daily pray with them, that they may learn to pray for themſelves!

The next enquiry that lies before us, is,

II. What it is to train up a child in his way.

And this may be conſidered with relation to the way or manner in which he ought to be trained, ſuitable to the ſtate of his young mind: Or to the way or courſe, to which he ought to be trained, ſuitable to the ſtate of his obligations. Our tranſlation leads our thoughts to the laſt of theſe. But the words in the original admit of both. Let us then,

1. Conſider it with regard to the way or manner, in which he ought to be trained. It ſhould be ſuitable to his youth.

We ſhould conſider the tempers and capacities of the young ones under our tuition, and take ſuch methods with them, as are moſt likely, by the bleſſing of GOD, to inform and work upon them, to open their narrow apprehenſions, to awaken their indolent tempers, to engage their backward attention, to inſinuate ſpiritual things into their tender minds, to make them in love with religion, and to lead them on in its ways, as we find they are beſt able to receive and bear it. *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, leſt they be diſcouraged* (*n*). Eſtabliſh your authority over them: This is the grand ſecret of

(*m*) Gen. xvii. 18. (*n*) Col. iii. 21.

of good government, and will save you the trouble, and them the smart, of many chastisements, which might otherwise be necessary for them. Set up that authority with resolution, but with as little severity as possible; and when once you have secured it, let meekness and love soften the yoke, and reign through all your dominion over them. Let no rigors exasperate, or break their spirits, especially in your treating with them about the things of GOD and their own salvation, lest you prejudice them against, and fright them from religion, instead of alluring them to it.

How easy is your work, and how pleasing the presage, where an ingenuous tenderness in temper feels the powers of such melting language, as *Solomon*'s mother breathed upon him! *What my son! and what the son of my womb! and what the son of my vows! Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings. It is not for kings, O* Lemuel, *it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted* (*o*). But if such pathetic indearments of address, such eloquent condescensions, find no access to their bosoms, you may then think you hear *Solomon* saying to you: *The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself brings his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight to thy soul* (*p*).

Train up a child *according to the measure of his way* *, as some read our text: Or *upon the mouth of his way*, as others read it: Thereby intimating, that we should treat our children according to their weakness, and lay no heavier burdens upon them,

(*o*) Prov. xxxi. 2, 5. (*p*) Ibid. xxix. 15, 17.

* עַל־פִּי דַרְכּוֹ *Juxta mensuram* seu modum (sic פִּי os sumi sæpe solet) *viæ suæ*, id est, pro captu ingenii ejus infirmioris, ut non eum plus oneres quàm ætas fert. *Mercer.* in Loc. Pro ratione viæ ipsius prout capax est ejus ætas. Pro ratione, *Heb.* secundum os. *Piscat.* in Loc.

than their age will bear; but gradually ſtock their memories with the treaſures of GOD's word, and inſtil ſacred truths into their narrow minds, by frequently dropping a little upon them, as we would fill a narrow-mouthed veſſel.

If we would *teach them knowledge, and make them to underſtand doctrine*, as thoſe *that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſts: Precept muſt be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little* (*q*). We muſt take pains with them, and exerciſe great humanity and compaſſion, meekneſs and patience towards them, condeſcend to the weakneſs of their capacities, and ſpeak to them in their own language. We ſhould begin with the firſt rudiments, the moſt eaſy, obvious and important things of religion, and lead them gradually onwards, opening and enforcing every truth, in the moſt plain familiar manner poſſible, as we find they are able to receive it.

Give me leave on this occaſion to recommend the catechiſing method, as well adapted to their advantage. The way of ſhort queſtions and anſwers is like the manner of their own converſes together; it ſuits the low and giddy ſtate of their minds, relieves the ſlowneſs of their conceptions, and the infirmity of their attention, and gives a proper exerciſe for the powers of their memories, which are uſually more ripe and prompt, than their other faculties, and more capable of improvement in their tender age. Our fathers have tried and proved this way of training up their children, and GOD hath plentifully honored it with happy ſucceſs. They made conſcience of it, and labored abundantly in it: And many of us have great reaſon to bleſs GOD for it, and to riſe up and call them bleſſed. But, alas! how doth it begin to grow into contempt with ſome, and out of faſhion with others! O that the riſing generation may not ſuffer

(*q*) Iſa. xxviii. 9, 10.

ſuffer through this branch of our miſtake, or of our neglect!

The word uſed in our text, is rendered catechiſe in the margins of ſome of your Bibles, and as ſome have obſerved, it points out the catechetical way of inſtruction, inaſmuch as the *Jews* catechiſms were expreſſed by a word derived from this *. If we may judge of the ancient by the later *Jews*, they began with their children about four or five years old, to teach them the knowledge of the Bible, and carried on their inſtructions, from the more familiar, to the more deep points of their religion †. And perhaps the Apoſtle might have his eye upon ſome ſuch practice, when he blamed the *Hebrews* for their ſlow proficiency in the doctrines of the chriſtian faith. *When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat* (*r*).

And to lead us chriſtians into the catechetical way of inſtruction, the new teſtament frequently expreſſeth teaching by the word, [κατήχεω] from whence catechiſing is derived. Thus *Apollos* particularly was inſtructed or catechiſed, [ἦν κατηχημένος] (*s*). He was initiated by inſtruction *in the way of the Lord*. And it is notorious § that in the primitive church, eſpecially for the firſt two or three centuries, the catechetical way of teaching was carried on with great diligence and ſucceſs. Perſons were firſt privately inſtructed at home, and then admitted into the rank of catechumens in public aſſemblies. And though the circumſtances

חנך * eſt rem quancunque initiare, dedicare primordia rei alicujus & initia prima ducere ſeu facere. Hinc חנוכת הבית dedicatio Domus. In puero eſt ejus inſtitutio: Græci appellant καθήκοντα, unde eſt apud Hebræos liber ספר חינוך de prima puerorum inſtitutione, catechiſmum appellant. *Mercer.* ubi ſup.

† Vid. Poli Synop. in Loc.

(*r*) Heb. v. 12. (*s*) Acts xviii. 25.

§ See a Collection of Teſtimonies to this purpoſe in *King*'s Inquiry, *p.* 140, 141. 1ſt edit.

cumſtances of our caſe are ſomewhat different from theirs; I cannot but think that this practice, for the ſubſtance of it, is worthy of our imitation.

We ſhould do well to catechiſe children in the way of the LORD; to teach them a good ſcriptural catechiſm, that they may have a form of ſound words, and then explain it to them, and aſk them ſuch queſtions upon it, as may tend to lead them into an underſtanding of what they learn, and to employ their own thoughts about it; ſuiting our inſtructions and queſtions to their capacities, according as they are more or leſs grown up to maturity of judgment. This brings us to,

2. Conſider the training a child in his way, with regard to the way or courſe, to which he ought to be trained, or in which he ſhould go.

This relates to the view we ſhould have in this work, that the children under our care may be brought into, and carried on in their way *; not in the way that they of themſelves have begun to make, or naturally would make their own way; but in the way, that ought to be their own way; the way of their own judgment, choice, and practice, under a divine influence; and the way, that GOD and we would have them go in.

This, in general, is *the way of the Lord*; the way of knowledge, duty, and happineſs; the way in which all the ſaints have gone, and got ſafe to heaven, and in which we ourſelves are going and hope to get thither, carrying our children along with us. It is the way of the ſcriptures, in diſtinction from all other ways of our own or other men's deviſing; the way of truth and holineſs, in oppoſition particularly to the groſs errors and vices, that are moſt prevalent and dangerous in the preſent age. It is the way of true religion and godlineſs: And more particularly the way of the chriſtian religion; the way of CHRIST's kingdom,

* Vid. Jun. in Loc.

kingdom, and the way of the new covenant of GOD's grace in him.

It would be almoſt endleſs to give you a detail of all the things in particular, which they ſhould be trained up in. The *Aſſembly*'s Catechiſm, for the ſubſtance of it, is, in my humble opinion, a very judicious, plain and ſcriptural ſummary of them. It is not the rule of their way; that lies only in the Bible: But I take it to be an excellent ſhort explication of the rule, as to its moſt important points of faith and practice.

However, as our ſubject ſeems to require that ſomething particular be ſaid concerning the way or courſe, to which children or young people ſhould be trained, and in which they ſhould go; ſuffer me to hint a few things, with reference to it, very briefly under three heads. Therefore,

(1.) We ſhould train them up in the way in which they ſhould go to GOD, for acceptance with him, and for all ſorts of bleſſings from him. And that is through JESUS CHRIST. For *I*, ſays he, *am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh to the Father but by me* (*t*).

If our children are *far from God* (*u*), they muſt periſh. This is as true of them, as of any of ourſelves. And ſince they are fallen ſinful creatures, as well as we, they cannot come near to GOD with acceptance, or receive any real bleſſings from him, but through JESUS CHRIST. We ſhould therefore begin early with them to teach CHRIST to them; to let them know that they are ſinners by nature and practice, and indiſpenſibly need a Savior.

Tell them what CHRIST is in his glorious perſon god-man, and in all his offices of prophet, prieſt and king; and that *there is ſalvation in no other*; *for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby they muſt be ſaved* (*x*). Teach them the neceſſity of

(*t*) John xiv. 6. (*u*) Pſal. lxxiii. 27.
(*x*) Acts iv. 12.

faith in him, and of returning from sin to GOD through him, without which they can have no saving interest in his favor, or blessing here, nor get to heaven hereafter. Direct them to think of GOD, as a great just and holy GOD, who utterly hates all iniquity, and is out of CHRIST a consuming fire to all sinners; and who can be a father of mercies, a GOD of peace, and an effectual friend to them, only in CHRIST and on his account. Instruct them to pray to GOD in the name of CHRIST, and to plead what he hath done and suffered on earth for all that the Father hath given him, that he might make their peace, and procure their pardon; and what he is now doing in heaven for them, as an intercessor on their behalf. Teach them to put no trust in themselves, in any righteousness or goodness of their own, as if they were worthy of GOD's acceptance; but to trust altogether in CHRIST and his righteousness, and in GOD's rich grace through him, and to expect all acceptance with GOD for themselves and their services, and all blessings from GOD alone on his account, or for the sake of what he hath done and suffered in the sinner's room and stead.

As soon as they are able to understand any thing, we should be instilling such things as these about their way to GOD; and never think them too young to learn CHRIST; or that they must be men or women grown before they are taught the knowledge of him. For this is to leave them in gross darkness, and in the way to eternal destruction.

(2.) We should train them up in the way, in which they should walk before GOD in CHRIST. And that is in an observation of all his holy commands.

They should be led into the way of godliness, of worship and obedience, through the great Mediator; into the way of reading and hearing GOD's word, of keeping his sabbath, and yielding themselves to GOD

God in Christ by acts of faith, repentance, love, and new obedience. An awe of God ſhould be urged upon them; and we muſt teach them to do every thing, as in his holy all-ſearching ſin-avenging ſight and preſence, to behave themſelves with a conſcience toward him, with uprightneſs of heart, with ſobriety, with exact truth and juſtice, and with all benevolence, and readineſs to do good to all they have to do with: And particularly, to honor and obey their parents and maſters, and to ſubmit to all their juſt commands.

They ſhould be obliged, by all prudent engaging and authoritative meaſures, to a performance of external acts of religious and moral duties toward God, their neighbour and themſelves: And reſtrained, as much as poſſible, from all outward acts of ſin; eſpecially from ſuch ſins as are moſt heinous in themſelves, and as they are moſt addicted to; ſuch as curſing or ſwearing, or taking God's awful name in vain, pride and obſtinacy, drunkenneſs, uncleanneſs, and all immodeſt words and actions, lying, ſtealing, injuring of others, or revenging themſelves upon them; and from keeping ill company, that would lead them into all, or any of theſe, or any other ways of ſin.

And if all gentle means have been tried in vain; if no kind and tender methods, no fair reaſonings, no ſolemn charges, no incouragements, no threatnings will prevail to regulate their conduct; faithfulneſs to God and them, obliges us to the unwelcome taſk of uſing ſuch corrections, mixt with mercy, as prudence tells us are moſt proper for their temper, age, and character, to reclaim them. *Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right* (*y*).

(3.) We ſhould train them up in the way of ſtrength to go to God, and to walk acceptably before

(*y*) Prov. xx. 11.

fore him. And that is by the ſpecial aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt.

They ſhould be acquainted with the corruption of their nature, and utter diſability of themſelves to do any thing truly good, and acceptable to GOD; and inſtructed about the nature and neceſſity of the Spirit's work upon them, to change their hearts, to turn them from ſin to GOD in CHRIST, to give them new principles of grace and holineſs, beyond the impreſſions of a religious education, to work faith, repentance, love, and every other grace in them, to enable them, by continued aids, to glorify GOD, and worſhip him acceptably through JESUS CHRIST, and to make them fit for his ſervice here, and for his glory hereafter.

We ſhould teach them to attempt every thing in the name and ſtrength of the LORD, looking upwards for a divine influence: And ſhould ſet before them the great encouragements of the Goſpel, for them to ſeek and hope for the bleſſed Spirit, to work all their works in and for them, in the ways of GOD's appointment.

Thus you have a ſhort, though but a very ſhort, and imperfect account of the way, to which they ſhould be trained, and in which they ſhould go.

We now proceed to the laſt branch of our text, which is,

Secondly, The encouragement or motive to this duty, taken from the great advantage and ſucceſs of it. *And when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

When he is old, that is, when he is arrived to years of maturity, and even to the lateſt age of life, *he will not depart from it.* That is, either, as ſome think, he will not depart from the good education, by which you have trained him up: Or, as others, will not depart from the way of GOD, to which you have trained him. In which-ever ſenſe you take it, it amounts to the ſame, and apparently

rently intimates the happy encouraging iſſue of this work *.

But this is not to be underſtood, as if a good education would entail grace upon our children, or of itſelf convey it to them. No, it is but a means of grace, which takes effect, according as GOD gives the increaſe: As is ſaid in another caſe. *Who is* Paul, *or who is* Apollos, *but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted,* Apollos *watered; but God gave the increaſe. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increaſe* (z). Divine grace will maintain its ſovereignty, and have the entire glory of all its operations.

The beſt education, the moſt frequent, plain and laborious inſtructions, affectionate advices, awful reproofs, faithful corrections, alluring carriage, holy examples, and fervent prayers, will not of themſelves new form the ſouls of our children, or make them truly religious. If the bleſſed Spirit do not ſet in with them, command a bleſſing upon them, and breathe a divine life through them, all will be in vain, as to any ſaving purpoſes. *For it is God, who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleaſure* (a). And it is only he, that *makes us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen* (b).

Nor

* Ut autem unâ ſummâ rem totam explicem, etſi haud injuriâ vaticinari potiùs quàm præcipere videri poſſum, ita pronuntio: Unum eſſe primum, idemq; & medium & ultimum in hac re caput, educationem rectam, legitimamque inſtitutionem. Atque hæc ego conducere, & adjumentum ad parandam virtutem adferre aio, adq; fælicitatem. *Xylandr. Plutarch.* de Liber. educand. p. 8.

——— Nunc adbibe puro
Pectore verba puer: nunc te melioribus offer.
Quo ſemel eſt imbuta recens, ſervabit odorem
Teſta diu. *Horat.* Epiſt. 2. Lib. 2.

(z) 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. (a) Phil. ii. 13.
(b) Heb. xiii. 21.

Nor conſequently is our text to be underſtood, as if none that are well trained up, ſhould ever eventually depart from the good ways in which they have been educated. Sad experience in all ages, and remarkably in our degenerate age, demonſtrates againſt this. O how many, that have had the beſt advantages of this kind, have turned the vileſt Apoſtates, even from the profeſſion, as well as from appearances of the power of godlineſs!

But yet there is a great and encouraging truth in this laſt clauſe of our text. The meaning of which you may take in two or three particulars.

I. Training them up in the way they ſhould go, is the moſt likely means to prevent their departing from it.

Though it is but a means, it is a means happily ſuited to its end. It aſſiſts their feeble thoughts, and cultivates the wildneſſes of youth. It directs their giddy tempers, and governs the extravagant fooliſh ſallies of their depraved hearts. It marks out a way before them, that they may not be left, in the midſt of confuſion and darkneſs, to ſtrike out one for themſelves. It furniſhes them with ideas of God, religion, and goodneſs, to be corrected or improved by riper judgment. It leads them into a way of thinking ſeriouſly about the moſt important of all concerns, which they might otherwiſe have taken no notice of. It lays hold on tender minds and affections, while they are moſt eaſily impreſſed, and before they are hardened in their wickedneſs. It anticipates temptations, gets the ſtart of this world, and of many fleſhly appetites, and prevents many a ſin. It ſubſerves the work of the miniſtry, and helps young ones the better to underſtand and regard what they hear in public. And, which is moſt of all, it is a means under God's appointment and bleſſing, to keep up a ſeed to ſerve him in all generations.

And

And I cannot but be jealous that one great reason, why so many in our days forsake the way of the LORD GOD of their fathers, and grow so sceptical, loose and profane, is, because family-religion runs low. Or, at least, that some of these melancholy instances are owing to great neglects in instruction, discipline, example, or prayer. And that *Eli*'s sin, sorrow, and shame, lie at the door of many among ourselves, that their *sons make themselves vile, and they restrain them not* (*c*).

The libertines of our age are aware of the tendencies of early impressions: And hence are their outcries against prepossessing the minds of our children with principles of religion. As if the light of revelation were to extinguish the most obvious dictates of natural light: Or it were of less concern to us christians, that our children be trained up in the knowledge of CHRIST, than it was to the heathens, that their's should be trained up in the knowledge of their gods. *Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory, for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this* (*d*)!

II. They will not easily depart from it.

Education-light sticks by them, and makes their first attempts against it a thorny path. They must have many a struggle, conflict, and wound, before they can get out of its reach, and wholly abandon the good ways of GOD, in which they have been trained. When they are alone, when they are upon their beds, when any dangers threaten them, and near prospects of death open before them; yea, sometimes, when they are in the midst of company, jollity, mirth and wickedness, the light and impressions, they have formerly had, awaken a stinging remorse, terribly lash their consciences, and make their hearts ake within them. They are forced to offer

(*c*) 1 Sam. iii. 13. (*d*) Jer. ii. 11, 12.

offer violence to their consciences, and to rack invention for plausible evasions, time after time, and, it may be, year after year, before they can wholly stupify and silence them. And they must go through the drudgery of many a self-condemning practice and reflection, before they can commit iniquity with greediness, and without disturbance.

Their early convictions make a stand against their corrupt inclinations: GOD's Spirit by these means strives long with them, and does not use quickly to give them up. Yea, many times the reboundings of first impressions are, and are designed of GOD to be, the forerunners of more effectual special operations of his holy Spirit. He hereby keeps them under the means of grace, till the day of his power comes to make them a willing people to him, and till the time of his love is come to say unto them, live. Hence,

III. They will not ordinarily depart from it.

Early impressions seldom, comparatively speaking, wear wholly off; but something of the first tincture most commonly abides. Where there hath been a good education, prudently and carefully managed in all its parts, it will, by the blessing of GOD, ordinarily be as a bridle to restrain them from flagitious wickedness, and a spur to excite them to keep up at least something of a form of godliness, and outward profession of religion.

And very often GOD is pleased to seal instruction, and crown a religious education with his special grace. He falls in with it, and that sometimes from the very beginning, as the means, that he hath appointed, and approves of, and makes effectual to saving purposes. Instances of this sort are numberless. The well ordered families of christians are the most usual nurseries of the churches; in them are the chief hopes of the rising generation; and the ministry, generally speaking, is most owned of GOD in

in happy effects among them. Every one's observation may sufficiently satisfy him concerning the truth of these things.

Though, to maintain the evidence of divine sovereignty, the sons of the stranger are sometimes brought to join themselves to the LORD, and an *Ishmael* is found in several families of the faithful: Yet the more standing method of GOD's gracious procedure, according to his covenant, is to bless the households of the righteous, and to *pour his Spirit upon their seed, and his blessing upon their offspring* (*e*). And *all that see them shall acknowledge, that they are the seed, which the Lord hath blessed* (*f*).

Accordingly our text may be taken as an indefinite promise, like that which GOD made to *Abraham*, the success of which was very comfortable in many branches of his family. *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they* shall *keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*; *that the Lord may bring upon* Abraham *that, which he hath spoken of him* (*g*). And O how many have heartily blessed GOD for religious parents or masters, that have taken pains to train them up in his way!

And when once GOD sealeth a good education with grace, works a thorow change upon our children's hearts, and makes his way become their way, the way of their judgment, choice and practice; he thereby *puts his fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him* (*h*). This will effectually preserve them from utter and final apostasy: They shall reap the benefit of their education-helps, under the teachings and operations of his Spirit, all their days; and shall be enabled to hold on in his way, even to their latest age. *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: He shall grow like a cedar in* Lebanon.

(*e*) Isa. xliv. 3. (*f*) chap. lxi. 9.
(*g*) Gen. xviii. 19. (*h*) Jer. xxxii. 40.

banon. *Thoſe that be planted in the houſe of the Lord, ſhall floriſh in the courts of our God. They ſhall ſtill bring forth fruit in old age: They ſhall be fat and floriſhing; to ſhew that the Lord is upright: He is their rock, and there is no unrighteouſneſs in him* (*i*).

Thus we have gone through both parts of our text. Let me cloſe all with a few words to thoſe, that have the charge of young perſons; and to thoſe, that are, or have been trained up in the way of the LORD.

Application. I. To thoſe of you, whether profeſſing parents or maſters, that have young perſons under your charge. See to your charge: See that you *train them up in the way they ſhould go.*

This is a matter of vaſt conſequence. For according to the good or ill turn, that is given to their principles, temper, and conduct, in the time of their youth, it is like to fare with them all their days in this world, and for ever in the next. The ſouls of your children and ſervants are truſts committed to your care; and CHRIST will one day inquire how you have diſcharged your truſts; whether, and how far, you have been faithful, or unfaithful in them.

Many of your children are children of the covenant, whom the LORD claims for his own, and whom you have ſolemnly given up, and devoted in their baptiſm to him. And will you ſlight his claim, and retract your own dedication of them to him; and bring them up for the devil rather than for him? O how perfidious and ſelf-reproaching muſt this be!

All your children are a part, and ought to be a very dear part of yourſelves; and according to the ways they walk in, they will be the torments and diſgrace, or the comforts and glory of your lives. You have been the inſtruments of conveying ſin

(*i*) Pſal. xcii. 12—15.

ſin and defilement to them; and according as you train them up, you are either delivered from their blood, if they periſh, or it lies upon your own heads. Can you then be ſo cruel to yourſelves and them, as to neglect your charge of them?

How careful are you about their bodies, to feed and clothe them, to provide for their health and eaſe, and to put them into a way of living comfortably in this world! And have you never read what CHRIST ſays, or do you think it is not applicable to them? *Seek ye firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you* (*k*). Or have you never heard, that *godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (*l*)? This is the way to the beſt riches in this world, and the next: And if GOD beſtows his grace upon your children, you need not doubt but he will take good care of them in the way of his providence.

But ſuppoſe there were no advantages to be expected from their piety and goodneſs for this world. Have you no care, no concern for, and will you take no pains about their precious and immortal ſouls, that they may be cultivated and improved, that they may be enlightned in the knowledge of CHRIST, and be born again, that they may eſcape the wrath of GOD, and live in glory and bleſſedneſs for ever? Will you, by your neglects, be the means of murdering, inſtead of being the means of ſaving them? O how will you anſwer this to GOD in the great day of account, when he ſhall make inquiſition for the blood of thoſe that were committed to your charge! How great is your guilt! How contrary to your own light, and to all the bonds of religion and humanity, of nature, conſcience and affection! And how ruinous to the intereſt of CHRIST in our world, and to your own childrens ſouls for ever!

(*k*) Matt. vi. 33. (*l*) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

God's word ſpeaks bitter things againſt you for it; your own conſciences, if awake, cannot but condemn you, and your children will one day riſe up and curſe you.

O careleſs parents and maſters, that have been unfaithful to your truſts, take conviction of your ſin, lie humble before God for it, and look to him through the blood of Christ to pardon it. But take heed that you do not add ſin to ſin by continued neglects. Whatever you have done hitherto, bring them up now, and henceforward, as God ſhall help you, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

You have frequent opportunities for it, as they are continually with you: And you have, or ought to have, an intereſt in their affections, and an authority over them. Improve theſe advantages to train them up for Christ; and do not ſuffer ſin upon them. Uſe all means for their ſalvation; and take encouragement from the word of God to hope for ſucceſs. And, as the Apoſtle ſays of huſbands and wives, *how knoweſt thou, O man, or woman, whether thou ſhalt ſave thy* (*m*) child or ſervant? There is a may-be, there is a likelihood of it, by a divine bleſſing on your faithfulneſs. This is an argument with you to do other things for them, relating to their outward concerns. You give them food and phyſic only with a may-be that they will live; you put them out to trades, and provide them portions, matches, and ſettlements in the world, only with a may-be they will do well. And why ſhould not this be a ſufficient argument with you, to do what in you lies, for the preſent and eternal welfare of their ſouls?

Have pity, O my friends, have pity on your childrens ſouls: And recommend them, and your labors with them, frequently and earneſtly in your prayers to the Lord, that he may have pity upon them,

(*m*) 1 Cor. vii. 16.

them, that he may seal instruction, and open their ears and hearts to good discipline. Plead his promises for the children of the promise; and give him no rest till he bless them.

We are now to add a word or two,

II. To those that are or have been trained up in the way of the LORD.

1. Are any of you now under a religious education? Accept of, and submit to good instruction and discipline.

Your minds are young and tender; your thoughts giddy, rash, and unexperienced; your imaginations, passions, and appetites much stronger than your judgments: You have treacherous hearts within you, dangerous snares all around you, and numberless enemies watching for all advantages against you. You do not know what is proper or best for yourselves, and are not fit to be your own masters.

Listen then to the good counsel of your serious and more experienced friends, and of those that GOD hath set over you. Ponder it in your hearts; and compare it with the scripture, as GOD shall help you, that you may see what truth and goodness there is in it. Take heed of neglecting, despising, or opposing it, through carelessness, pride, or stubbornness of spirit; and, by the grace of GOD, comply with all injunctions and restraints, that are according to his word. This is your duty, and your own great advantage, for this world and the other. GOD commands it, and it is supposed that your parents or masters command it too: and, by GOD's command, obedience to them is your duty in all lawful things; it is at your utmost peril to refuse it. Hear, ye young ones, what GOD says, *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out* (*n*). Shame and death shall be his lot. And *he that being*

(*n*) Prov. xxx. 17.

often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy (*o*.)

Your souls are precious, and must quickly be in eternal happiness, or in eternal misery, as certainly as the souls of others. You young ones must be saved the same way as others, if ever you are saved at all. The knowledge and faith of the LORD JESUS CHRIST are as necessary for you, as for them. Your hearts must be changed, and the course of your lives altered, by the grace of GOD, if ever you see his face with comfort. You must die as well as others, and may die as soon as others: And if you die in impenitence and unbelief, strangers to CHRIST, and in your sins, you are lost for ever.

How great is your mercy, that have the assistance of religious parents or masters, in what relates to your best and highest concerns! How thankful should you be for this and every other means of grace! and how desirous to profit by them! But as ever thou wouldst desire this, have a care of resting in them, or in a bare outward compliance with them. Know thou, that nothing short of GOD's special influence and almighty grace, can make them effectual to thy salvation: And beg his blessing upon them, who hath said, *I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me* (*p*).

2. Have any of you been trained up in the way you should go? Take heed that you do not depart from it.

You have more knowledge, and it may be more convictions, than many others: Take heed you do not act against your knowledge nor stifle your convictions. This would highly aggravate your guilt and condemnation: For you know who hath said, *That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes* (*q*).

If

(*o*) Prov. xxix. 1. (*p*) Ibid. viii. 17.
(*q*) Luke xii. 47.

If you, after all, depart from the good ways of the LORD, you will be of all creatures moſt miſerable. Every admonition, counſel, and warning you have had, every charge, that hath been given you, every correction or indearment, that hath been uſed to inforce it upon you, will be called over again, and pleaded againſt you at GOD's tribunal. Every tear, that hath been dropt over you, every prayer, that has been put up for you; every good example, that has been ſet before you; and every Sermon, you have been brought under, will riſe up in judgment againſt you. Every dawn of light, that hath broke upon your mind, every conviction of ſin and duty, that hath ſprung up in your conſcience, every neglect of theſe, every ſtruggle you have had with them, every oppoſition you have made to them, every means, you have uſed to extinguiſh them, and all the hardneſs of heart you have contracted under them, or after them, will appear, as ſo many ſwift and terrible witneſſes againſt you, to your utmoſt confuſion in the great day of account.

If there are any among you, that have begun to apoſtatize from a good education, I pity you at my heart. Your caſe is awfully threatning; and the leſs you think it ſo, or the more you think to brave it out, the more its direful ſymptoms blacken upon you. It is a ſerious matter of trembling to conſider, how expoſed you lie to the curſe of GOD, and further hardneſs of heart here, and to be ſealed up, in his righteous judgment, to eternal deſtruction hereafter. The LORD have mercy upon thee before it is too late, if it be not already ſo. O that there might yet be grace with him to awaken and reclaim thee, and to bring thee ſo effectually back to his way, that thou mayſt never more depart from it!

SERMON VIII.

The Improvement of Present Time.

Preached on the NEW-YEAR'S-DAY of 1731. For the Benefit of the Charity-School at *Gravel-lane, Southwark.*

ECCLES. IX. 10.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.

THE sacred admonition contained in these words, should often turn upon our thoughts, especially when any affairs of moment lie before us. And as we are this day met together to subserve a design of great importance to the rising generation, a design to which every christian, that duly considers it, cannot but wish prosperity, and ought to lend his assistance, according to the opportunities and abilities GOD has favored him with, our present work will be to excite our diligent application to all the duties of life, and particularly to those, that we are now especially to attend to, and that have

have on former occasions of this sort been explained and vindicated, directed and recommended, by better hands.

It is only in the present life, that we can be capable of the services we are now called to; they must be done while we are here, or be left undone by us for ever: And as we have but a little time to live, it should be matter of deep concern with us, that we may have grace to make the best use of it for every good purpose, for which it is given us, according to the instruction in our text, in which we have,

First, A serious exhortation: *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* And here we have the extent of the duty, and the manner of performing it.

1. The extent of the duty: It relates to *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do.*

There is an *Hebraism* * in the phrase, and the meaning of it is, whatsoever thou art able to do, and hast opportunity or occasion for. Thus in the law of purification, it is said of the woman, *If she be not able*, or *her hand find not a sufficiency* † *to bring a lamb, she shall bring two turtles* (*r*). And *Samuel* said to *Saul*, that *the Spirit of the Lord should come upon him*, and he *should do as occasion should serve him* (*s*), or what his hand should find §. Accordingly, the expression in our text may be paraphrased after this manner, "Whoever thou art, that art capable of "doing any thing, whether high or low, rich or "poor, male or female, bond or free, whether thou "art in a public or private character, with regard "to civil or religious things; whatsoever is neces- "sary or convenient, fit and proper for thee to do, "whatsoever is good or commendable in itself, ho- "norable unto GOD, advantageous to thyself, or "useful to others, whatsoever by thy station and

* כל אשר תמצא ידך
(*r*) Lev. xii. 8.
† אם-לא תמצא ידה די
(*s*) 1 Sam. x. 6, 7.
§ עשה לך אשר תמצא ידך

" circumstances in this world, or by thy relation to " the other, thou art obliged to do, and hast oppor- " tunities for, all this comes into the duty that thou " oughtest to do." And then,

2. As to the manner of performing it; *do it with thy might: i. e.* Let all thy strength or might be employed in it; *hoc age*, exert thyself like one in earnest about it, and heartily concerned that it may be done in the best manner, and to the best purposes. Do it speedily without delay, take the first opportunity for it, and be not slothful or indolent in it, but lay thyself out to the utmost, as far as GOD has made thee capable of it, or shall help thee for and in it. Let all thy abilities, natural and acquired, temporal and spiritual, all thy gifts and graces, riches and reputation, time and skill, health and strength, all thy favor and friendship with GOD or men, all the authority thou hast received from GOD and hast over men, all thy subjection to both, all thy endowments of body or mind, all thy thoughts, words and actions, all thy influence in the world, all thy opportunities and advantages of every kind; let all these be seasonably, speedily and vigorously applied to whatsoever work of usefulness or importance in any respect thou mayst be called to, as occasion shall serve thee. We have,

Secondly, The arguments to enforce this exhortation. And these are two: One taken from the incapacities that will befal us in the grave; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave:* And the other, from our hastning to it; *whither thou goest.*

1. From the incapacities that will befal us in the grave.

This life is the only time for these duties; when we die, there will be no farther opportunities for them: *For there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave.*

It

It is not to be supposed that these words are to be understood absolutely, without any restriction, as if *Solomon* would assert that our souls die with our bodies; for he tells us, (chap. xii. 7.) that *when the dust shall return to the earth, as it was, the spirit shall return to God that gave it.* And this agrees with the whole current of divine revelation, which speaks of the soul, as uncapable of being *killed* with the body; and of death, as the soul's *departure* from the body, and as a *yielding* or *giving up the ghost* or spirit, that dwelt in it, and yielding it up to GOD that he may *receive* it. And it speaks of the souls of believers, as *departing to be with Christ*, and as being *present with the Lord*, as soon as they are *absent from the body* (*t*).

But it is evident the inspired writer in our text had his eye only upon the things we have to do in this present life and world, which in the foregoing verse (ver. 9.) he describes by the *days of the life of our vanity, which God has given us under the sun.* And to shew that it is only the affairs of this life, of which he says that we have no concernment with them after death, he continues, in the verses immediately after our text, to discourse of action, business and enjoyments, and of wisdom and understanding *under the sun* (ver. 11—16.) And in this sense all those passages of scripture are manifestly to be understood, that speak of our *thoughts perishing*, and of the *purposes of our hearts being broken off* at death, and the like; for they cannot be construed otherwise in any tolerable consistency with those many other passages, that speak of the soul, as in a state of life, and enjoyment immediately after death. And its departure from this world, when the body dies, is a plain intimation that we have then done with all the affairs of this life, so that we can have no knowledge of them, or business with them afterwards.

As

(*t*) Matt. x. 28. Gen. xxxv. 18. Luke xxiii. 46. Acts xv. 10. and xii. 23. Phil. i. 23. 2 Cor. v. 8.

As to our ſouls, they at death will go into another world, where they will have no more converſation with this, or relation to it. Our knowledge there will be after another ſort, and our employment to other purpoſes, altogether uſeleſs to this world, and foreign to all the buſineſs we have now to do in it; *neither have we any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the ſun* (ver. 6.) And as to our bodies, they will lie ſenſeleſs and unactive in the grave till the general reſurrection, and will never return more to live and act, and ſerve the ſame deſigns upon earth, which now they are called to.

So that it may be ſaid of our bodies abſolutely, and of our ſouls reſpectively to this world, and to our preſent ſtate in it, that *in the grave*, or in the ſtate of the dead *, *there is no work*; there is nothing that we can do for GOD, ourſelves, or others, which we are here called unto: All our uſeful labors will in this reſpect ceaſe or die with us; *Bleſſed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their labors* (*u*).

And as in the grave there is no work, ſo there is no *device*. No ſchemes or projects, we would now lay, can be formed or improved any more; there is no knowledge of what is done, or of what is to be done in the common buſineſs of this life; and there is no wiſdom or prudence to manage the affairs, which we are now concerned in, to the beſt advantage. All theſe die with us; for *when our breath goeth forth, we return to the earth, and in that very day our thoughts periſh* (*x*): *Our purpoſes are broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts* (*y*). What therefore is to be done, muſt be done now, or never; it muſt be done in the day of life; for *when the night of death comes, no man can work*. The other argument is taken,

2. From our haſtning to the grave.

Our

* בשאול

(*u*) Rev. xiv. 13.
(*x*) Pſal. cxlvi. 4.
(*y*) Job xvii. 11.

Our time for this buſineſs is but ſhort; for we muſt quickly die, and go down to the grave: It is the *grave whither thou goeſt**, or whither thou art going; we are continually going to the grave. The *living know that they ſhall die*, (ver. 5.) but how ſoon, GOD only knows; for all our times are in his hands, *ſeeing our days are determined, and the number of our months are with him* (z). We can be ſure of no more than the preſent moment; we not only ſhall go to the grave, but we are all now on our journey thither, ſtepping forward towards it: It is the grave, *whither thou goeſt.* Whoever thou art, young or old, rich or poor, healthy or infirm, thou art going to the grave, thou art in the way to it, and every ſtep thou takeſt, brings thee ſtill nearer and nearer to this *houſe appointed for all living.* The longer thou haſt lived, the leſs time thou haſt to live; thy journey ſhortens apace, and a few more ſteps will bring thee to thy laſt, when thou wilt ſtep into the grave. *Whatſoever therefore thy hand findeth to do*, while thou art in the way, and before thou getteſt to the end of life's ſhort journey, *do it with thy might.* In farther ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall, by divine aſſiſtance, only

Exemplify the exhortation, and enforce it by the arguments in our text, with reſpect to three remarkable and comprehenſive inſtances: And conclude with an application, ſuited to the ſpecial deſign of this aſſembly. Therefore,

I. Whatſoever thou haſt to do with reſpect to thy own ſoul, do it with thy might; for thou art haſtning to the grave, where nothing of that kind can be done.

He that thinks he has nothing to do for his own ſoul, is very unfit to do any thing elſe in a right manner, or to any good purpoſes. I therefore begin with

* אשר אתה הלך שמה

(z) Job xiv. 5.

with this, and shall consider it with relation both to sinners and believers.

1. Thou, O sinner, hast much to do relating to the concerns of thine own immortal soul.

I am not about to put thee upon doing on the foot of the first covenant, as if thou wert to obtain eternal life by or for thine own doings. Thou art not to do any thing with this view or design, as if thou couldst thereby make GOD amends for thy sins, or work out a righteousness to thyself to justify thee in his sight, or to deserve his favor, and recommend thee to his acceptance; for the whole of this is to be found alone in CHRIST, according to the riches of GOD's grace: And what thou art called to do, in order to thy finding these in him, is, under a sense of thine own guilt and danger, humbly to plead and depend upon, or to believe in, the doings and sufferings of JESUS CHRIST, that they may be thy righteousness to eternal life; *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*; and *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness* (*a*). Hence when the jailor said, *What must I do to be saved?* the Apostles said to him, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (*b*). Accordingly, when the *Jews* said to our LORD, *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* He said to them, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent* (*c*).

Nor am I going to put you upon doing in your own strength, what must be done by the strength of CHRIST; for all that I can say, and all that you can do, will be ineffectual to salvation, without special grace to set it home upon your hearts, and to quicken them unto spiritual and holy action. *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength* (*d*); and *it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure* (*e*).

But,

(*a*) Rom. x. 4, 10. (*b*) Acts xvi. 30, 31. (*c*) John vi. 29.
(*d*) Isai. xlv. 24. (*e*) Phil. ii. 13.

But, with an eye to Gospel-grace in speaking, and with a desire that you may have an eye to it likewise in hearing, I must assure you from the GOD of heaven, that there are many things to be done, in the order of means, which you are capable of doing with regard to your souls salvation; and there are many things above your power to do of yourselves, which you are bound to attempt, as far as you find yourselves strengthned for them, and which you have encouragements in the Gospel to attempt, with an intire dependence upon CHRIST for grace to make it effectual. It is a most dangerous delusion, to sit down in the midst of sloth, as if you were not to concern yourselves about these things, till you feel an overbearing power of almighty grace to put you upon it. *Shew yourselves men*, says the prophet, *bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors* (*f*). And *labor not*, says our LORD to the unbelieving *Jews, for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you* (*g*). You should consider what is your duty, and seek and wait for grace, in the way of grace, to enable you to perform it, and not put off a concern about salvation, or lay aside the means of finding it, or be slighty, careless, or negligent in seeking it. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon* (*h*).

Whatever therefore thou hast to do, relating to the welfare of thine own soul, be diligent and speedy in it without delay; for thou art a dying creature, and death may cut thee off before thou art aware, and then there will be no opportunity for it; if it is not done till then, thou art eternally undone without remedy. As thou art a reasonable creature, and hast an immortal soul to be saved or lost for ever, consider

(*f*) Isa. xlvi. 3. (*g*) John vi. 27. (*h*) Isa. lv. 6, 7.

ſider ſeriouſly and often, with the cloſeſt application of mind, and in the moſt affecting manner thou canſt, how important a caſe this is above all others, and how things ſtand between GOD and thy ſoul for eternity, where thou art, whither thou art going, and what thou art like to be for ever. Search the ſcriptures, that there thou mayſt read thy ſin and Savior, the guilt thou art under, and the pardon that is provided in the blood of CHRIST for ſuch a guilty wretch as thou art; and that thou mayſt know, under divine inſtruction, the way of thy eſcape, thro' him, from ſin, and from the wrath to come. Take in conviction of the neceſſity of regeneration, and of divine grace to form thee anew. Attend upon the miniſtrations of the word; neglect no opportunities of hearing it; let not little excuſes put thee by; hear for thyſelf, hear with diligence; take heed of wandrings, drowſineſs and ſleep; look upon thyſelf concerned in the things that thou heareſt; and hear as for the life of thine own ſoul. Look up unto the LORD, and cry to him, as well as thou canſt, for a bleſſing on all the means of grace thou haſt opportunities of enjoying, that they may be attended with his power for conveying light, life and grace into thy dark, dead and polluted ſoul; and, according to the light and convictions thou haſt, and the inclinations and impreſſions thou findeſt in thy ſpirit, caſt thy periſhing ſoul on the LORD JESUS, and come unto GOD through him, for mercy to turn thee from all thine iniquities, and to make thee a partaker of eternal life. But do not imagine that thou canſt do this of thyſelf; but, under a ſenſe of thine own utter inſufficiency, try how far the grace of GOD will carry thee in repenting and believing, and do not reſt ſatisfied, or give over thine attempts this way, till thou findeſt that thou haſt believed to the ſaving of thy ſoul, and haſt that repentance that will never be repented of.

Theſe

These things are, beyond all others, of the greatest concern for thee, and thy neglects of them will be thy just and eternal confusion; and these things must be done now or never, the time of this life is the only time of grace to them, that have not yet found it; there is no hearing or praying, no believing or repenting, or turning to GOD in the grave. If death finds thee unbelieving and impenitent, out of CHRIST and in thy sins, thou art lost, irretrievably lost, for ever; thy soul is gone, thine all is gone, and past redress, to all eternity. There will be no more seasons of grace, no more opportunities for thy soul's advantage, no more hopes of mercy for thee, no more probability or possibility that thou shouldst ever obtain mercy, nothing but unmixed wrath and fiery indignation will be the portion of thy cup for ever. Oh dismal case! And thou art hastning apace to it, it may be thine own case to day before to morrow, and thou art in nearer danger of it to day, than thou wast yesterday. If thou slumberest away thy time in sin, thy damnation does not slumber with thee; that waits for thee, and will quickly awaken thee out of thy self-deceivings, and swallow thee up in insupportable endless miseries. But,

2. Thou, O believer, hast likewise much to do relating to thine own soul.

Though thou hast oil in thy lamp, thy lamp wants daily trimming; though thou hast a sure and abiding interest in CHRIST, thou needest still more of the light and comfort of that interest; and though thy state is safe, and fit for death, yet thou mayst not know it, and thou needest still to be more and more in an actual preparedness for it. Thou hast many corruptions, that war against thy soul, still farther to be mortified and subdued, and many temptations to struggle with, to watch and pray against, that they may not overcome thee. Thou hast a daily course of communion with GOD in CHRIST to carry on,

on, and friendly diſpoſitions toward thy fellow-chriſtians and fellow-creatures to cultivate, for the improvement, peace and ornament of thine own ſoul. Thou haſt numerous duties, perſonal and relative, to be attended to, and every gift and grace of the Spirit to be ſtirred up, exerciſed and improved, in which thine own ſoul's advantage is concerned. Thou wanteſt ſtill more knowledge, and ſtronger faith, more thorough and evangelical repentance, and deeper humiliation before GOD for ſin, more lively and affecting love to him, more intenſe and conſtant delight in him, more zeal for his glory, more love to his people, more pleaſure and uprightneſs in his ways, more weanedneſs from this world, more ſpirituality and heavenly-mindedneſs, and more evidences of, and meetneſs for, the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Thou haſt not yet fully attained any of theſe, nor art thou already perfect (*i*).

Whatever therefore thou haſt to do in a way of duty, and advantage to thyſelf, with reſpect to theſe things, *do it with thy might*; labor to uſe what grace thou haſt, and to improve the means of grace thou enjoyeſt for theſe purpoſes, according to the Apoſtle's exhortation, *Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue*; *and to virtue, knowledge*; *and to knowledge, temperance*; *and to temperance, patience*; *and to patience, godlineſs*; *and to godlineſs, brotherly-kindneſs*; *and to brotherly-kindneſs, charity. For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But he that lacketh theſe things, is blind, and cannot ſee far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old ſins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election ſure*; *for if you do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall: For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtred unto you abundantly, into*

(*i*) Phil. iii. 12.

into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*k*). And, *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: To him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen* (*l*). Lament after a departing God, and follow hard after him, for a revival and increase of his work in your souls, that he would *fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ* (*m*), as the Apostle prayed for the *Thessalonians*; and, *that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God* (*n*), as he prayed for the *Philippians*.

Death hastens to you apace, and oh! how uncomfortable will it be to die, if the work of faith and love, and every other grace, be at a low ebb in your hearts. You may not know whither you are going; you may be filled with all horror, as if you were going to hell, just before you get to heaven: And would you not dread the thoughts of that? Though, if thou art a true believer, thy soul will, immediately after death, be perfected in all grace and holiness, beyond what it can be in this world; yet surely thou wouldst not be willing to die with uncertainty in thyself, whether thou art going to heaven or hell: It is hard venturing into eternity with such uncertainty, which, for what you know, may be ruin.

And there are some graces so suited to the present life, that if they are not exercised here, they never can have any place in thee hereafter. Godly sorrow for sin, trusting God in the dark, patience under tribu-

(*k*) 2 Pet. i. 5—11.
(*l*) Ibid. iii. 18.
(*m*) 2 Thes. i. 11, 12.
(*n*) Phil. i. 9, 10, 11.

lation, bearing with the infirmities and provocations of thy friends and brethren, and forgiving repeated injuries, are noble graces, which ought to have their perfect work in us, as the Apoſtle *James* ſpeaks of one of them (*o*). Our ſouls are hereby greatly improved, and fitted for the better ſtate in heaven; and the more they abound in us here, the more comfortably we are like to die, and the brighter we are like to ſhine in glory for ever, as the Apoſtle intimates, when, ſpeaking of the hope of the heavenly inheritance, he ſays, *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, tho' now for a ſeaſon (if need be) ye are in heavineſs through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that periſheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praiſe, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jeſus Chriſt* (*p*). Therefore while we are in this life, before the night of death comes, we ſhould follow after theſe, being *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* Thus, whatever we have to do for our own ſouls, whether we are believers or unbelievers, we ſhould do it with all our might. Hence,

II. Whatever thou haſt to do with reſpect to God, and Christ, and religion, *do it with thy might*; for thou art haſtning to the grave, where nothing of this can be done. All that has been or ſhall be offered under the other heads, may be conſidered with an ultimate reference to God, and Christ, and religion; and therefore we need ſay the leſs under the formal conſideration of what we have to do for their intereſt and glory.

We ſhould meditate on divine things, read, hear, preach, and pray, with a ſerious regard to God, like perſons in good earneſt, and ſhould labor to ſpread the glory of Christ and the Goſpel with holy zeal and fervor. Haſt thou any deſigns for God, for the honor of his name, for the glory of his

(*o*) James i. 4. (*p*) 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

his Son, or for the interest of religion? Hast thou any schemes formed in thy mind, any thoughts or intentions in thy heart of this sort? Do not delay them, or be slothful in them, but be speedy and vigorous to put them into execution; for thou wilt quickly be lodged in the grave, and all thy thoughts and projects will perish there. Hast thou any work upon thy hands for GOD? Art thou called in the civil community, in the church, in thy family, or in any station in which thou art fixed, to say or do any thing for GOD, to serve the honor of CHRIST, and interest of religion? Hast thou time and opportunity for things of this nature? Hast thou health of body, and abilities of mind for them? And do thy worldly circumstances give thee advantages for honoring the LORD with thy substance? Do not be slothful or careless in his work, let no opportunities slip, no needful pains or expence be spared, and no time be lost; but let all thy time, gifts, graces, health, strength, substance, abilities, and influence upon others, subserve these glorious ends; and labor to do as much as possibly thou canst for GOD and religion in a little time, because thou hast but a little time for it.

Thou art going to the chambers of death; every moment brings thee nearer to them, and there thou canst do nothing more for the glory of GOD, and for the propagation of the Redeemer's interest in the world. It therefore must be now, or never; now quickly, or not at all; and this should spur thee on to do it now with all thy might, as our LORD himself argued: *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work* (*q*). Hence,

III. Whatever thou hast to do, with respect to others, *do it with thy might*; for thou art hastning to the grave, where nothing more can be done for them.

(*q*) John ix. 4.

Haſt thou any thing to do for thy family and friends, any thing that is juſt and honorable in itſelf, neceſſary, uſeful and comfortable to them, in their ſpiritual or temporal concerns? Do not delay it, do it as ſpeedily as thou canſt, and ſerve their peace, comfort and advantage, whatſoever thy ſtation is among them, as much as thou canſt now; for thou wilt quickly have no opportunities for it, death will fling thee into a ſtate, in which thou wilt be no more to thy friends and family than another man. As GOD therefore ſaid to *Hezekiah*, *Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die* (*r*).

Haſt thou any thing to do for the public? Canſt thou do any thing to ſerve thy generation according to the will of GOD? Canſt thou contribute any thing to the proſperity of the beſt of governments under which we live, or to the common peace and liberties of mankind? Canſt thou help forward the good of the civil or religious ſocieties, to which thou belongeſt, or to any of thine acquaintance and neighbours, friends or enemies? Canſt thou do any thing to adviſe them that want counſel, to heal breaches, and to promote peace and friendſhip among them that are at variance? Canſt thou do any thing to procure juſtice to be done for thoſe that are oppreſſed and injured, or mercy to be ſhewn to the miſerable, or to help the diſtreſſed, to relieve the poor and neceſſitous, or to mend the riſing generation, that they among them that need thy help now, may, by the bleſſing of GOD, be put into circumſtances, that ſhall make them helpful rather than burdenſome to all about them? Canſt thou do any thing to ſubſerve the comfort and uſefulneſs of others in this life, or their eternal happineſs in the next, to regulate their minds and manners, that they may be ſerviceable members of ſociety here, or to bring them to CHRIST, and to GOD through him, for the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls hereafter? Do all this with ſpeed and diligence,

(*r*) 2 Kings xx. 1.

diligence, spare no labor, cost, or time, which thou art capable of, and which are needful for it.

All your opportunities of doing good to others wear off apace; you are going out of this world; GOD only knows how soon you may be brought to the dust of death, and then, farewel to all service of the souls or bodies of others for ever. If therefore you really desire to be public blessings, or, according to your spheres of life, to do any good to your generation, it must be done out of hand, or never can be done by you at all.

Thus we have gone through the general view we proposed from these words, and have done it in such a practical way, as made its own application: However, we might go on to improve it in several uses; to convince us of the sin and danger of slothfulness and delays in every duty, and especially in those that are of the greatest moment, and eternal consequence; to humble us in our reflections upon our neglects hitherto; to put us upon applications to the blood of CHRIST for pardoning mercy, and upon earnest prayer for his Spirit to enable us unto all watchfulness, readiness of mind, and diligence henceforward in every thing that concerns his glory, our own and others good. But my time will allow me only to desire you to apply what has been said to the particular occasion of our coming together, which is to subserve the good education of many poor children in the fear of the LORD, and in reading, writing and cyphering, as far as may fit them for service in some low stations of life, that they, by the blessing of GOD, may be useful and comfortable in this world, and eternally happy through JESUS CHRIST in the next. In order to this, let me,

Use 1. Remind you young ones of the counsel in our text.

Now, while you by a merciful providence, and the good dispositions of charitable christians, are favored with opportunities of learning necessary things,

do it with all your might. Be careful to improve your present advantages; and cry mightily to GOD for wisdom and grace to enable you to profit: Mind first the things of GOD and of your souls, that you may have the pardon of your sins, and an interest in JESUS CHRIST; and then be diligent at your books and business: Take heed of lying, stealing, rudeness, cursing and swearing, and taking GOD's name in vain, or using any naughty words: Do not allow yourselves to abuse or quarrel with one another, or to be ill-natured, spiteful or mischievous to any one whatsoever: Be careful to learn and understand your catechisms, and to keep the LORD'S-DAY holy: Be sober and orderly, dutiful, mannerly, and subject to your parents, master and mistress, and friends, that have the charge of you: Be kind one to another, and let every one of you strive to set a good example to the rest in sobriety, religion, and industry: Make good use of your present opportunities, that your time and souls may not be lost, and that the pains and cost spent upon you may not be in vain. Do all this, by the grace of GOD, *with your might*; for your present opportunities will soon be over, and young as you are, you are going to the grave; and it will be sad for you to die, if you sin away your present mercies, and sin yourselves into hell.

2. Let me remind those of you that are parents, masters, or mistresses, or managers of children under your care, to attend your charge *with all your might.*

Labor to instruct them in the most easy and familiar manner, as they are able to receive it, in every thing needful, relating to GOD and CHRIST, and themselves, and others; to shew them their sin and danger, GOD's gracious provisions in CHRIST for them, and their duty towards him, and toward all they have to do with: Make conscience of your duty to them in what you have undertaken to do for them, pertaining to their souls and bodies; do all that in you lies to restrain them from evil, to cultivate

vate their minds and manners, to order all things about them with the utmost prudence, faithfulness, patience, care, and diligence, and to govern them with tender authority, with encouraging allurements, and merciful corrections, according to their several tempers and behaviour; spare no pains to do them good, and to hand down blessings through them to the rising generation: Earnestly beg wisdom of GOD to enable you to discharge your duty in the best manner to them, and recommend them, and all your labors with them, to his grace for all desirable success. Do these things *with all your might*, while you have opportunities for them; for you are going to the grave, where no such service can be done any more. And,

3. Let me entreat every one that is capable of lending any assistance to this good work, to *do it with all their might*.

It is a work that needs your kind and generous contributions, and is worthy of them; it is the work of the present day that you are called to, and you may never have another opportunity for it, and therefore should do your utmost towards it now. These children are cast by the providence of GOD upon your care and kindness; their parents cannot give them a necessary education, cannot put them into a tolerable way of struggling for a livelihood, and they are unable to help themselves. Many of them are orphans, and all of them children of the poor and needy.

GOD has put it into the hearts of some christians to be tender toward them, and, in the bowels of their compassions, to consult, and contribute with great chearfulness and liberality, for their relief. But the work is too expensive for them to go through it, without the assistance of others, that may be like-minded with themselves. They have seen, and daily see and hear of the happy effects of what they have done, and are continually doing, for these ne-

ceſſitous children, many of which, by the bleſſing of GOD upon theſe means, have been reſcued from the jaws of deſtruction for both worlds. They are not weary of their work, but have great ſatisfaction in it; they have tried it, and do not repent the expence of their money, time and labor to promote it; they are willing to perſiſt, and exert themſelves with vigor ſtill, in the laudable undertaking, without any ſecular advantage peculiar to themſelves, or elſe we had not been now aſſembled here on this occaſion: And they entreat your concurrence, with longing deſire that fruit may yet farther abound to this good account.

And oh! how much better is it to ſee the little, young, deſtitute creatures, behaving orderly under prudent management, than to ſee them rambling about the ſtreets, expoſed to all temptations and dangers, defiling others, and defiled themſelves, without reſtraint! To ſee them ſober, modeſt, and dutiful, than to ſee them abandoned to all that is rude and inſolent, wicked and abuſive! To ſee them trained up in the knowledge of chriſtian principles, and in the fear of the LORD, than to ſee them overſpread with ſottiſh ignorance and barbarity, bidding defiance to the GOD that made them, and to all that is ſacred or even decent! To ſee them inured betimes to diligence, fitted for buſineſs, and giving promiſing proſpects of future ſervice to the families where they may be placed, than to ſee them ſunk into ſloth, and like to be the peſt of the earth, and the torment of all they have to do with! In a word, how much better is it to ſee them put into the way of ſerving GOD, of being uſeful to men, and of laying hold on eternal life for themſelves through a Redeemer, than to ſee them the ſordid ſervants and ſlaves of ſin and of the devil, to the miſchief of all around them, and to their own eternal perdition!

Nothing can be ſo bad, ſo unchriſtian, profane and miſerable, but there is reaſon to fear, it may meet

meet in them, if they are left to all the disadvantages of corrupt nature, and to all the temptations that attend their forlorn oppressing circumstances, without any attempts to correct them: And nothing can be so good, so truly religious, regular and happy among the lower ranks of persons in our world, but, by the grace of GOD, there is reason to hope they may attain it, by means of the pious care of those, that are willing to engage in their assistance and improvement. And oh! what a pleasure must it be to every good and generous mind, to be instrumental in giving them a turn of such complicated benefit, so much to the glory of GOD, the interest of the LORD CHRIST in the world, and their own good; so much to the furnishing of well-ordered families with faithful and capable servants; so much for the advantage of the church, and of the world, of the protestant religion, and of a protestant free government; and so subservient to the regulation and prosperity of ages yet unborn! Methinks every one should be ambitious to bear a part in the noble design, in which they may warrantably hope for a blessing, and for which many will rise up and call them blessed.

To contribute to this is real charity, which you may be assured will be duly applied. It is charity of the best and most extensive kind; charity to their parents and themselves; charity to their souls and bodies at once; charity immediately executed, and taking good effect upon the civil and religious communities now subsisting; and charity to succeeding ages, to their posterity, and to your own, that will be intermingled with them, and will one way or other feel their influence.

Were I to urge this duty from GOD's authority, goodness and love, from principles of gratitude and beneficence, of human and christian compassion, of honor and delight: Or were I to urge it upon you for your own and their sakes, for the sake of the church of CHRIST, and of mankind in general, for your

your friends, your neighbours and acquaintances, and for your and their poſterity's ſake, and for the LORD's ſake: The arguments from each of theſe topics would ſwell and multiply upon our hands. But I would not ſuſpect your want of conviction of ſo plain and important a duty, eſpecially after the many excellent diſcourſes, that have been annually delivered at this place to prove and inculcate it.

I would only ſtir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, from the conſideration of the great argument we have been upon, *viz.* That here is a good work, which your hands find to do; you have now a fit occaſion for it, and your time for doing it is but ſhort. You are dying creatures, and if you neglect it while you live, you will have no farther opportunities for it in the grave: Why then ſhould any of you be backward to it, or ſparing in it? You are now under a ſpecial call of providence to it, and may think you hear it echoing from the mouths of about one hundred and twenty poor indigent children at once, as ſo many pleas and cries in your ears, and in the ears of the LORD of hoſts for it. You may die before you have another opportunity to do any thing toward their relief, this may be your laſt; lay hold therefore on this, leſt you ſhould not meet with another. And if, upon conviction of duty, there are any good inclinations or purpoſes in any of your hearts towards this reaſonable ſervice, do not ſuffer them to cool, do not give them time for it, but execute them immediately: Give now, give liberally, give chearfully, give like ſuch as are deſirous to do good to all, and eſpecially to the houſhold of faith, while you may; and *do it with thy might*; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither thou goeſt.*

SERMON

SERMON IX.

The Tendency of Liberality to Riches, and of Covetouſneſs to Poverty.

Preached at the *Old-Jewry*, *March* 3, 1741-2, to the SOCIETY for Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Proteſtant-Diſſenting Miniſters.

PROV. XI. 24.

There is that ſcattereth, and yet increaſeth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

IN this book we have a copious and fine collection of divine proverbs, in ſhort and ſignificant ſentences, to direct our conduct, with reſpect to the various relations and circumſtances of the civil and religious life: And that they are a part of the holy ſcriptures, which *were written aforetime for our learning* (*a*), appears, not only from their moral nature, and being conſtantly reckoned to the canon of the old teſtament, but likewiſe from the uſe that is made of them in the new. The author to the *Hebrews* gives us a quotation, according to the LXX, from

(*a*) Rom. xv. 4.

from *Prov.* iii. 11, 12. and calls it, *The exhortation, which ſpeaketh unto us, as unto children,* ſaying, *My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon, whom he receiveth* (*b*). There is likewiſe a plain reference to chap. xxv. 21, 22. when the Apoſtle ſays, *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink: For in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head* (*c*); and to chap. x. 12. when another Apoſtle ſays, *Charity ſhall cover a multitude of ſins* (*d*).

It would be eaſy to ſhew that the ſenſe of many of *Solomon*'s proverbs, and particularly of thoſe, that relate to benevolence, and charity to the poor, are introduced, by our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apoſtles, into the new teſtament; and ſo are bound upon our conſciences as chriſtians, not only by the nature and reaſon of things; but likewiſe by the authoritative injunctions of our bleſſed Savior and his immediate miſſionaries, as well as of an inſpired writer of the old teſtament.

Theſe ſententious ſayings are moſtly delivered, as aphoriſms, or general maxims, without any orderly connection. But we have ſometimes a cluſter of them together, of much the ſame import and tendency, to caſt the better light on one another, and the more deeply to impreſs them upon the mind; as in our text, and the two following verſes, which all concur in recommending, and enforcing the great duty of liberality. *There is that ſcattereth, and yet increaſeth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal ſoul ſhall be made fat; and he that watereth ſhall be watered alſo himſelf. He that withholdeth corn, the people ſhall curſe him; but bleſſing ſhall be upon the head of him that ſelleth it,* (ver. 24, 25, 26.)

Some of this wiſe man's pithy ſentences are plain and obvious to every underſtanding at firſt ſight; but others

(*b*) Heb. xii. 5, 6. (*c*) Rom xii. 20. (*d*) 1 Pet. iv. 8.

others of them are more obscure, and require a closer attention of mind, to get into their true meaning. Of this sort we may reckon the words of our text in both its branches; one of which is brought in by way of antithesis to the other. They carry an air of improbable and surprising paradoxes to the covetous and worldly-minded, who naturally imagine that scattering tends to poverty, and withholding to increase: But, if we weigh things in the balance of the sanctuary, we shall find, that these two maxims of *Solomon*'s are pious, wise, and right; and that the sentiments, which lie in opposition to them, are all carnal, injudicious, and wrong. And if we take them (as I think we may) to be allusive to the management of a husbandman in sowing his seed, the sense will stand as easy, as the thought will appear to be beautiful and just: For every one knows, that the more plentifully the husbandman scatters abroad his seed, in proper proportions, he is so far from losing the corn, which he has sown, that, by the ordinary blessing of providence, he reaps the better crop in its season; and that he, who, through a niggardly temper, will not allow a sufficient quantity of seed for sowing his ground, will certainly have but a scanty harvest. As this is evidently true in the literal sense, relating to the natural world; so we may consider it as holding good in the figurative sense, relating to the moral world: And viewing it in this light, the two next verses may be taken as a comment upon it, and it will be found to be of much the same import with 2 *Cor.* ix. 6. where the Apostle says, *He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

In further discoursing on the words proposed for the subject of our present meditations, I would, by divine assistance, consider,

I. The

I. The deſcription they give of perſons of very oppoſite characters: *There is that ſcattereth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet.*

II. What is affirmed of them reſpectively, one *ſcattereth, and yet increaſeth*; the other *withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.*

III. Account for the truth of both theſe propoſitions, or ſhew how it comes to paſs, that *he who ſcatters increaſes*, and that *withholding more than is meet tends to poverty.* We will begin with conſidering,

I. The deſcription our text gives of perſons of very oppoſite characters: *There is that ſcattereth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet.*

The word here rendered ſcatter, is the ſame that is uſed and tranſlated diſperſe, in *Pſal.* cxii. 9. where it is ſaid of the good man, *He hath diſperſed, he hath given to the poor:* And he that ſcatters is *the liberal ſoul*, as he is ſtiled in the verſe after our text. He is one, who, with a free and generous ſpirit, ſtudies and labors to ſpread the moſt uſeful and extenſive influence by all manner of means, which he is capable of, all around him, that he may be a common bleſſing to the church, and the world, to all perſons and communities, in every place where he comes; and one, who is ready to diſtribute of his temporal ſubſtance for promoting religious and civil liberties and intereſts, for doing good to the ſouls and bodies of men, and particularly, for relieving the neceſſitous and diſtreſſed, that he may *deliver the poor that cry, and the fatherleſs, and him that hath none to help him*; that *the bleſſing of him that is ready to periſh may come upon him*; and that *he may cauſe the widow's heart to ſing for joy* (*e*). In a word, he is one, that *draws out his ſoul to the hungry*, and is *given to hoſpitality*, as it is finely and ſtrongly expreſſed, *Iſa.* lviii. 10. and *Rom.* xii. 13.

And

(*e*) Job xxix. 12, 13.

And when we consider ourselves, as happily placed, by a kind and gracious providence, in a land of light under the Gospel-dispensation, and as called by CHRIST's name, we must surely bring into the lovely character of him that scatters, the man, who *lays by him in store, as God has prospered him* (*f*), that he may have something to give on all proper occasions, for promoting the cause and kingdom of our LORD JESUS; for supporting and encouraging his servants, while they live; for comforting their destitute and afflicted families, when they die; and for relieving CHRIST's poor, who are his members, and whom he speaks of with all tenderness, as if they were parts of his natural body: And so he that scatters, *As he has opportunity, doth good unto all men; especially unto them, who are of the household of faith* (*g*).

And how doth the beauty of the character brighten, when, like the good man, who *shews favor and lends*, we *guide our affairs with discretion* (*h*); and all this is done with a truly christian spirit, and with the utmost generosity, that is consistent with prudence in a due consideration of our own circumstances, and of the calls of providence, and with the strictest honesty in paying our just debts to our families and others! We must not give robbery for a burnt-offering; nor think to atone for injustice by a charity, which is not our own to give: But when, by the favor of an indulgent providence, our hands are at liberty, our hearts should be so likewise, that we may give something out of our superfluities to others conveniences; out of our conveniences to others necessities; and out of what may be called our necessaries to others extremities.

We should manage our religious and charitable distributions, not with contrivance how to shift off our obligations and opportunities for them; but with devising, how in the best manner to improve them; not with a grudging, but with a free and chearful heart:

(*f*) 1 Cor. xvi. 2. (*g*) Gal. vi. 10. (*h*) Psal. cxii. 5.

heart: Not with a vain-glorious temper to be ſeen, and applauded of men, or to tickle our own pride; but with a ſincere view to the glory of God, and being approved in his ſight: Not from a mercenary ſpirit of ſelf-love; but from a noble diſintereſted principle of love to him, of whom are all things, and to our chriſtian brethren and fellow creatures for his ſake: Not to make a merit of it with God; but in obedience to his commands, and under a deep ſenſe, that *when we have done all, we are unprofitable ſervants* (*i*), who muſt look for free acceptance thro' a Redeemer: And not with a ſelf-ſufficient temper of mind; but with an humble dependence on divine grace, to enable us to do it in ſuch a religious manner, as ſhall be well-pleaſing to God through Jesus Christ. And ſo *whatſoever we do in word or deed*, we ſhould *do all in the name of the Lord Jeſus; giving thanks to God and the Father by him* (*k*), for making us capable of ſuch ſervices, and willing to engage in them.

On the contrary, he that withholds, keeps back, or ſpares more than is meet, or right, as the words ſignify, is the covetous man, whoſe narrow ſelfiſh ſpirit will not ſuffer him chearfully to pay his perſonal, or his public debts; much leſs to practiſe beneficence at an expence, that cannot be demanded by human laws. He loves his money, more than honeſty, and alms-deeds; more than his duty to God, and doing good to men; and had rather keep what he has, than communicate for any of the valuable and neceſſary purpoſes, that have been mentioned; yea, had rather heap up treaſures on earth, than lay up one in heaven: He either will take no care or pains for ſerving his generation, or the intereſt of Christ and religion, according to the will of God; or, will go into no ſchemes for ſuch ſervices, that will touch his pocket: He will either part with nothing for the moſt worthy and important uſes,

(*i*) Luke xvii. 10. (*k*) Col. iii. 17.

uses, in which he has not a personal interest; or, if by one means or other he is constrained to lend his assistance, it is either with such reluctance, as gives him pain, instead of pleasure, in doing it, or, with so strait a hand, as *withholds more than is meet*; more than becomes him, considering the circumstances that GOD has given him; more than is fit to be withheld from the moving objects, that offer to his religious and compassionate regards; and more than the word of GOD, and his own conscience, were it faithful, would allow him to withhold.

No arguments derived from humanity or christianity; from the tenderness of human nature, or the fear of GOD; from the authority of divine commands; from the love and grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; or from the promises, relating to this life, or that which is to come, can work his heart up to bear his proper proportion in generous and beneficent acts. He will rather rack his brains for a thousand excuses to quiet conscience, and secure his reputation in criminal hoardings, than give himself any trouble to get a just view of the deformity of his temper, and to obtain a glorious victory over it; and will rather contrive to increase his own stock at the expence of others, and that, perhaps, by some fraudulent and oppressive measures, than take any thing from it, to honor the LORD with his substance, and deal his bread to the hungry.—But it is time to go on to consider,

II. What is affirmed of these persons respectively: One *scatters and yet increases*, or more is added to him; and the other *withholds more than is meet*, or right, *but it tends to poverty*, or to his own want. Instead of growing richer, he is in the way of being really the poorer for it.

We might consider this increase and want, with respect to our best interests, that relate to the enriching of the soul in goodness, grace and holiness, pleasure and hope, that spring up to eternal life. Distri-

buting in the manner, and for the purpoſes, that have been deſcribed, enlarges the heart, and makes it open, free and generous, with growing propenſions to every good work: It improves us in reſemblances of our heavenly Father, who *is good and doth good*; is *rich in mercy, and of great kindneſs* (*l*); and *makes his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good*; *and ſends rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt* (*m*): It carries us into a lovely imitation of our great LORD and maſter, who fed multitudes, that were ready to faint, with a beneficent, as well as miraculous hand, and *went about doing good* (*n*): It is one way, that he himſelf has preſcribed, for *laying up treaſure in heaven, where neither moth nor ruſt corrupt*; *and where thieves do not break through nor ſteal* (*o*): And it gives the nobleſt ſatisfaction to our own minds, under a conſciouſneſs of contributing to the happineſs of others, and of uſing and improving the good things of this life, for the excellent and important purpoſes, for which the great GOD has intruſted them with us, as ſtewards to manage for him. Hence we are told, that *the good man is ſatisfied from himſelf*; and *the merciful man doth good to his own ſoul* (*p*). In this, as well as in every other inſtance of duty, it is true, that *in keeping* of GOD's commandments *there is great reward* (*q*). A man then feels himſelf to be right, he has an inexpreſſible pleaſure in what he is doing, and in after-reflections upon it; and an increaſe of this kind is certainly the beſt of all others. But he, that *withholds more than is meet*, is an entire ſtranger to all this. He is poor-ſpirited; has a contracted ſoul; is deſtitute of thoſe amiable graces, by which our GOD and Savior are moſt conſpicuouſly imitated and glorified; his heaped-up treaſures will be a witneſs againſt him at the laſt day; and he knows nothing of the moſt refined, manly and divine pleaſure,

(*l*) Pſal cxix. 68. (*m*) Matt. v. 45.
(*n*) Acts x. 38. (*o*) Matt. vi. 20.
(*p*) Prov. xiv. 14. and xi. 17. (*q*) Pſal. xix. 11.

ſure, that can be felt, in the uſe of creature-enjoyments; and ſo is the worſt of loſers.

But as our text ſeems moſt directly to ſpeak of an increaſe in that, which is ſcattered, and of a want of that, which is withheld. We may, more agreeable to its immediate deſign, conſider this matter, with reſpect to our worldly ſubſtance, as that is not leſſened, in any valuable conſideration of it; but is improved to an increaſe by diſtributions on all proper occaſions, for doing good; and as withholding it, more than is meet, tends to poverty, or want.

You know the obſervation, that the royal *Pſalmiſt* made, toward the cloſe of his life, concerning the merciful man, who was eminent for acts of this ſort of righteouſneſs; *I have been young*, ſays he, *and now am old; yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his ſeed is bleſſed* (*r*). God returned the liberality of ſuch good men into their own, or their childrens boſoms; and, notwithſtanding all that had been diſperſed to others, there was no want to them, or theirs, that feared him. *Job* was a memorable example of beneficence and compaſſion to the poor and needy, the widow and the fatherleſs, as appears from the account, which that upright man gives of himſelf, ſaying, *When the ear heard me, then it bleſſed me; and when the eye ſaw me, it gave witneſs to me: becauſe I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherleſs, and him that had none to help him. The bleſſing of him, that was ready to periſh, came upon me; and I cauſed the widow's heart to ſing for joy. I put on righteouſneſs, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor*, &c. (*s*). At another time, in what a ſolemn appeal doth he ſay, *If I have withheld the poor from their deſire, or have cauſed the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morſel myſelf alone, and the fatherleſs has not eaten*

 thereof,

(*r*) Pſal. xxxvii. 25, 26. (*s*) Job xxix, 11—16.

thereof, &c. *Then let mine arm fall from my ſhoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone* (*t*). And though, for the trial of his faith and patience, he was, for a time, throughly ſtript of his worldly poſſeſſions; yet, behold *the end of the Lord, who is very pitiful and of tender mercy* (*u*); he in due ſeaſon reſtored him double of all that he had enjoyed before. *The Lord bleſſed the latter end of* Job *more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thouſand ſheep, and ſix thouſand camels, and a thouſand yoke of oxen, and a thouſand ſhe-aſſes* (*x*). If you compare this with the inventory, that is given of his former ſtock, chap. i. 3. you will find that the amount is juſt as much more.

And how many are the inſtances of temporal proſperity, that we ourſelves may have obſerved in the families and poſterity of ſincerely religious and benevolent perſons, who have been wiſe and ready for every good work of piety and charity, according to their abilities! They have either had ſuch a viſible increaſe of their outward eſtates, as has exceeded all their former hopes and deſires; and, like the widow's handful of meal, and her little oil in a cruſe, with which ſhe ſuſtained the prophet *Elijah* in his extremity, has neither *failed* nor *waſted* (*y*): Or elſe they have had ſuch a ſecret increaſe of the inward contentment of their own minds, as has brought down their deſires to their circumſtances, and given them a ſweet reliſh of ſuch conveniences and comforts of life, as they enjoyed; and this has made them richer in themſelves, even with reſpect to the good things of this world, than if they had ever ſo great an abundance, with cravings that ſtretched beyond it. I am much perſuaded, that few, if any, inſtances can be found to the contrary; unleſs their liberality has run into heedleſs, random profuſions, without duly conſidering the ſtate of their own affairs, or of the objects

(*t*) Job xxxi. 16—22. (*u*) Jam. v. 11.
(*x*) Job xlii. 12. (*y*) 1 Kings xvii. 9—16.

jects of their bounty: Or unless there has been some other criminal excess in their way of living; or some remarkable defect in their oeconomy, or in their upright and religious character; or some corrupt principle, that has governed and tainted their charitable contributions.

But, on the other hand, many who, through a covetous temper, withhold more than is meet, do not enjoy what they possess: They have no heart to use it, but grudge themselves and their families the agreeable accommodations, if not the necessaries of life; and so are really poor in the midst of their greatest affluence. According to a just estimation of things, they are no richer by all their silver and gold, than if it still lay in the ore of the *Indian* mines: And it is very often seen, that what they scrape together with a great deal of anxiety, care and pains, and without the pleasure of making any good use of it, is soon lavished away by the extravagance of their heirs; and poverty is wrote upon their names in their posterity. Such misers, methinks, should be sensibly touched with the humbling reflection of the royal preacher, when he said, *I hated all my labor, which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knows whether he shall be a wise man, or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor, wherein I have labored, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity* (z). And if they themselves be reduced to want, as they sometimes are, they have *lost their gods, and what have they more* (a)? as *Micah* said in another case. They, of all others, least know how to bear it; and they, of all others, are least pitied or assisted under it. Which leads us to the next thing proposed, and that is to,

III. Account for the truth of both these propositions, or shew how it comes to pass, that *he who*

(z) Eccles. ii. 18, 19. (a) Judges xviii. 24.

ſcatters increaſes; and that *withholding more than is meet tends to poverty*.

It can be no wonder that every virtuous, ſpiritual and holy diſpoſition of the ſoul increaſes by frequent and proper exerciſe; and loſes its force and vigor, and aptneſs for action, by diſuſe and neglect: For this is common to all principles and habits of the moral, or religious and ſupernatural kind; is confirmed by daily obſervation and experience; and ariſes partly from the nature of things, and partly from the ſtated courſe of divine diſpenſations and influences in the world of nature and of grace. Hence, what our bleſſed LORD ſays, holds true in theſe, as well as in other caſes. *Whoſoever hath*, (i. e.) makes a good uſe of what he has, *to him ſhall be given, and he ſhall have more abundance*; *but whoſoever hath not*, or behaves as if he had not, *from him ſhall be taken away, even that he hath* (*b*).

But there may be more difficulty in conceiving whence it is, that the moſt generous creatures ſhould increaſe in their worldly advantages, by means of their generoſity; and that the moſt ſtrait-handed ſhould ſuffer loſs, in their temporal concerns, by their covetouſneſs. And yet, as this is often true in fact, ſo it may, in part at leaſt, be accounted for, from the bleſſing of GOD upon the one, and his blaſt upon the other; and from the friendſhip of men toward the one, and their diſaffection to the other.

1. The bleſſing of GOD is upon them, that ſcatter; and his blaſt upon them, that withhold more than is meet.

If we believe a providence, we muſt own that GOD intereſts himſelf in the affairs of this life, to the enlarging of ſome, and leſſening of others, as his infinite wiſdom ſees beſt. Even a heathen prince was brought, by GOD's awful dealings with him, to ſuch a conviction, that *the moſt High rules in the kingdom of*

(*b*) Matt. xiii. 12.

of men, and gives it to whomſoever he will, as to be conſtrained to acknowledge, that *he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him, What doeſt thou* (*c*)*?* And this is the current doctrine of inſpired writers, with reſpect to all ranks and degrees of men. *The Lord makes poor, and makes rich; he brings low and lifts up; he raiſes up the poor out of the duſt, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghil, to ſet them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory* (*d*). For *promotion comes neither from the eaſt, nor from the weſt, nor from the ſouth. But God is judge: he puts down one, and ſets up another* (*e*). *He pours contempt upon princes; — Yet ſets he the poor on high from affliction, and makes him families like a flock* (*f*). And *Agur*'s wiſe and excellent prayer, *Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me* (*g*), goes on a ſuppoſition, that all affairs of life are under the diſpoſal of divine providence. Though *the diligent hand* is the ordinary means, yet *the bleſſing of the Lord* is the ſupreme cauſe of *making rich, and he adds no ſorrow with it*, as may be ſeen by comparing *Prov.* x. 4. with ver. 22. What he gives with a bleſſing is without guilt, and anxious care in getting and keeping it; and without ſorrow to imbitter the enjoyment of it; and unleſs he is pleaſed to ſucceed our undertakings, all will come to nothing. Hence it is ſaid, *Except the Lord build the houſe, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain: It is vain for you to riſe up early, or to ſit up late, to eat the bread of ſorrows* (*h*)*: For ſo* (i. e.) by his building the houſe, keeping the city, and bleſſing a man's labor, *he gives his beloved ſleep*, that he may lie down on his bed, and take his reſt with an eaſy, calm and quiet mind.

(*c*) Dan. iv. 32, 35.
(*d*) 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8.
(*e*) Pſal. lxxv. 6, 7.
(*f*) Pſal. cvii. 40, 41.
(*g*) Prov. xxx. 8.
(*h*) Pſal. cxxvii. 1, 2.

The like doctrine of providence, in ordering our temporal affairs, runs through the new teſtament. Our bleſſed Savior led his diſciples into it, when he taught them to pray to their heavenly Father, to *give them their daily bread*; and cautioned them againſt *ſolicitous*, *diſtruſtful*, and *diſquieting care about food and raiment*; becauſe he, who feeds the *fowls of the air*, and cheriſhes and adorns *the lilies of the field*, *knows what* his children need, and *will add all* ſuch *things to them*, that *ſeek firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs:* And CHRIST aſſured them in the ſame diſcourſe, that all their own labor and anxiety would be ineffectual for a ſupply, without the bleſſing of GOD; as you may ſee by conſulting *Matt.* vi. 11. 25—34. He at other times told them, that the *very hairs of their head were all numbered* (*i*); and that *not a ſparrow is forgotten before God*; *nor falls on the ground without their heavenly Father* (*k*). And if the moſt minute affairs are under his direction and government, we may be very ſure, that the principal turns and circumſtances of life cannot but be ſo. Hence, when the Apoſtle exhorted the *Corinthians* to *lay by in ſtore* for charitable uſes, he ordered that the proportion ſhould be, *as God had proſpered every one of them* in their ſecular concerns. And, in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, which I take to have been wrote by the ſame Apoſtle, he draws an argument to fortify chriſtians againſt covetouſneſs, from GOD's providential care of them, ſaying, *Let your converſation be without covetouſneſs*; *and be content with ſuch things as ye have: for he has ſaid, I will never leave thee, nor forſake thee* (*l*).

And who can doubt, but that the *God of the ſpirits of all fleſh*, and *whoſe kingdom rules over all*, can, by innumerable ways and means, eaſily prevent or bring loſſes; and give or withhold an increaſe of the bleſſings of this life, as ſeems good in his ſight? How often

(*i*) Matt. x. 29, 30. (*k*) Luke xii. 6, 7.
(*l*) Heb. xiii. 5.

often do we read of GOD's giving one and another grace or favor in the eyes of persons, that were of importance to them! And, what a remarkable dominion did he maintain over the spirits of *Israel*'s neighbouring enemies, in restraining them from desiring, or attempting to invade their land, when all their males should leave it defenceless, by going up to *Jerusalem* to appear before the LORD, at their solemn festivals, thrice in the year! *Exod.* xxxiv. 23, 24. And in the common concerns of life, the GOD of nature, who filled *Bezaleel*, and his companions, with knowledge and understanding for all manner of workmanship, and teaches the husbandman discretion for plowing and sowing, and threshing out his corn; (accounts of which you may read at your leisure in *Exod.* xxxi. 3—6. and xxxv. 30—35. and *Isa.* xxviii. 24—29). This GOD gives wisdom to some, more than others, for managing the various businesses of every station to advantage; and directs some, rather than others, into safe and profitable branches of trade and commerce, and commands a blessing upon them. He, who has all hearts in his hands, secretly inclines some, for reasons which they themselves, perhaps, can give no account of, to be good customers to one, rather than another; and to pay their just debts, and that in proper time and season, to one, rather than another. He raises up friends and instruments of good to one, in their lives and at their deaths, rather than another; preserves one from unfaithful and perfidious, or from wasteful and heedless servants; from knaves and thieves, from enemies and storms by sea or land; and from devouring flames; whilst others suffer severely by one or another, yea, it may be by many, if not all of these means. And he gives a vigorous and active state of health, fit for bustling through the world, and prosecuting business to advantage; or sends infeebling, lingering and expensive sicknesses to some, rather than others.

By

By what an eaſy caſt of providence, in theſe and abundance of other ways, viſible and inviſible, can the great Governor of the world ſecure, or ruin a man's affairs; and then retrieve them, or render them irrecoverable, either gradually and inſenſibly, or on a ſudden, all at once. If therefore any of us are full, and all that we had is multiplied, well may it be ſaid to us, as it was to *Iſrael*, *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, and ſay in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth. But thou ſhalt remember the Lord thy God; for he it is, that gives thee power to get wealth* (*m*).

Now, in whoſe favor may we humbly expect that the kind diſtinctions of GOD's providence, in the ordinary courſe of them, will turn, but on behalf of thoſe, to whom he, who is faithful and true, has moſt explicitly, directly and particularly promiſed them? And who are they, but ſuch as are ready on all proper occaſions to diſtribute, with a liberal hand, for his glory, and for the relief of the neceſſitous, in love to him, and in obedience to his commands? How full and numerous are his gracious promiſes of temporal, as well as ſpiritual proſperity, that glitter in the ſacred pages to perſons of this character! Your own recollection will readily furniſh you with many of them. Some have been already mentioned, and it may ſuffice to point out only a few more, by way of ſpecimen, ſuch as theſe. *Honor the Lord with thy ſubſtance, and with the firſt-fruits of all thine increaſe; ſo ſhall thy barns be filled with plenty; and thy preſſes ſhall burſt out with new wine* (*n*). *He that has pity on the poor, lends to the Lord; and that which he has given him, will he pay him again: He that gives to the poor ſhall not lack* (*o*). *Caſt thy bread upon the waters; for thou ſhalt find it after many days* (*p*). *The liberal deviſes liberal things; and by liberal things he ſhall ſtand* (*q*). *Give,*

(*m*) Deut. viii. 11—18.
(*n*) Prov. iii. 9, 10.
(*o*) Chap. xix. 17. and xxviii. 27.
(*p*) Eccleſ. xi. 1.
(*q*) Iſa. xxxii. 8.

Give, and it ſhall be given unto you; good meaſure, preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and running over, ſhall men give into your boſom; for with the ſame meaſure, that ye mete withal, it ſhall be meaſured to you again (*r*). And, as has been obſerved, *He which ſows bountifully ſhall reap alſo bountifully* (*s*). You may likewiſe conſult at your leiſure *Deut.* xv. 10. *Pſal.* xli. 1, 2, 3. and *Iſa.* lviii. 6—11.

But are there any promiſes of this nature to them, that *withhold more than is meet?* No, on the contrary, he *which ſows ſparingly*, as is ſaid in oppoſition to him that ſows bountifully, *ſhall reap alſo ſparingly* (*t*). Whatever GOD may do in his ſovereign diſpenſations, as LORD and governor of this world, for ends beſt known to himſelf, the covetous, the hard-hearted, and the ſelfiſh, have no covenant-claim to the good things, even of the preſent life; and to have them out of a covenant-way, is to have them rather as a curſe, than a bleſſing; and ſo they may be more injurious, than advantageous, and, upon the whole, much worſe, than not to have had them at all. Hence, we are told, that *he who loves ſilver, ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver; nor he who loves riches with increaſe*; that *riches are kept for the owners thereof to their hurt* (*u*); and that *they who*, through a greedy temper, *will be rich* at any rate, *fall into temptation, and a ſnare, and many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil* (*x*). Nay, GOD has threatned to deprive ſuch of their riches themſelves: *For wealth gotten by vanity ſhall be diminiſhed; he that oppreſſes the poor to increaſe his riches—ſhall ſurely come to want:* And *he that haſteneth to be rich, has an evil eye; and conſiders not, that poverty ſhall come upon him* (*y*).

What! Do all theſe paſſages in the word of GOD ſtand for nothing? Are they not a ground of faith and

(*r*) Luke vi. 38. (*s*) 2 Cor. ix. 6. (*t*) Ibid.
(*u*) Eccleſ. v. 10, 13. (*x*) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.
(*y*) Prov. xiii. 11. and xxii. 16. and xxviii. 22.

and hope to him, *that ſcatters* on one hand; and of fearful expectation to him, *that withholds more than is meet* on the other? *Verily there is a God, who judges in the earth* (*x*): And as it is ſaid, with reſpect to his *threatnings*, as well as promiſes, that *he abides faithful, and cannot deny himſelf* (*a*): So we may aſſuredly conclude, that there ſhall be, one way or other, a performance of both, in the courſe of his providential proceedings; though we may not always ſee how, and in what particular circumſtances, it is ſo. —But, for a little further clearing of this point, I am to add that,

2. The friendſhip of men is toward them, *that ſcatter*; and their diſaffection to thoſe, *that withhold more than is meet.*

There is indeed a very criminal ſenſe, in which, as *Solomon* tells us, *the rich hath many friends*, as well as *the poor is hated, even of his own neighbour* (*b*). But the friendſhip there condemned is either merely mercenary, or but an empty flattering compliment, on account of the riches, rather than of the perſons of the rich; and not the friendſhip, that is gained by their prudent, ſeaſonable and generous diſtributions for the good of others: For as it is a man's wiſdom and duty to *make to himſelf friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs* (*c*): So his diffuſive liberality ſhould, and naturally will, ingratiate him into the eſteem of his fellow-creatures. Every one, that has but the leaſt ſpark of an ingenuous temper in him, will be a friend to the good, beneficent, and public-ſpirited man, who is a bleſſing to all around him: He lives with honor, and dies lamented: Yea, it is for ſuch a *good man*, that the Apoſtle ſays, *ſome would even dare to die* (*d*). Multitudes rejoice in his proſperity; and are willing to contribute towards it, as opportunities offer: Their reſpect to him, makes them chooſe to

(*x*) Pſal. lviii. 11.
(*b*) Prov. xiv. 20.
(*d*) Rom. v. 7.
(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 13.
(*c*) Luke xvi. 9.

to do him every good turn, they are capable of; and to take his part in all the affairs of life: And, if providence ſuffers him to be involved in difficulties, without any apparent fault of his own, they will have a touching concern for him, and be ready to do what in them lies to counſel and aſſiſt him. He will have many, in the worſt of circumſtances, to ſhew themſelves friendly to him.

But, the mere muckworm, who lives only to himſelf, who ſhuts up the bowels of his compaſſion, and has no heart to do good with his abundance, will be deſpiſed by all that know him. He lives with diſreputation, and dies unmourned; he makes to himſelf ſecret, if not open enemies; and becomes the object of generous ſcorn: Many are cool and indifferent toward him, and do not care whether he ſinks or ſwims; he is the laſt perſon in the world, that they would ſerve out of choice: Nay, they are even tempted to neglect the common duties of benevolence, that are owing to all mankind, in their regards to him. And if, by any turn of providence, he is reduced in his temporal eſtate, he finds little pity in the hearts of others, who could never find any in his own; and few will be ſolicitous for his help, who, while he was able, would never lend a helping-hand to eaſe the neceſſities and miſeries of his fellow-creatures. So that, upon the whole, whether we take the matter with a reference to GOD, or man, *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that has ſhewed no mercy* (*e*).

Application. Having thus gone through both branches of our text, and ſomewhat accounted for the truths they ſet before us, what remains, but to be influenced and regulated in our own practice by them? Let us therefore, without fear of impoveriſhing ourſelves, be ready to ſcatter liberally for promoting every good work, and particularly that of relieving the poor widows, and orphans of proteſtant-diſſenting

(*e*) James ii. 13.

diſſenting miniſters, which we are now called to: And let us take heed of withholding more than is meet on ſuch a moving occaſion, leſt it ſhould one way or other tend to, and iſſue in our own want.

Several of my reverend brethren, that have gone before me in this ſervice, have proceeded, with good advantage, upon many excellent topics, to lead you on to this important charity; and I have been endeavouring, according to my poor meaſure, to remove ſome principal obſtructions to it, which unbelief too often throws in the way, not only of the carnal and covetous, but even of many ſerious and religious minds. My deſign herein is not, that they ſhould engage in this noble act of beneficence with ſelfiſh views toward worldly intereſts: God forbid: this would be to debaſe and defile the offering: But what I chiefly aim at is, that, in an humble dependence on God's promiſes and providence for his care of us, while we are going on in the way of duty, all our other chriſtian principles may be ſet at liberty to exert themſelves, under divine influence, in the utmoſt generoſity, and to the worthieſt ends, with all poſſible freedom and delight. And, I cannot but think, that we have now before us an exceeding fit and proper opportunity, to try what manner of ſpirit we are of.

Were we to look into the families of many deceaſed miniſters of the Goſpel, we ſhould find ſuch deplorable circumſtances of want and diſtreſs among their widows and orphans, as, duly conſidered, muſt melt the hardeſt heart. They are not only the poor, which God in his providence has ordered to *be always with us* (*f*), to exerciſe our charity; but they are poor widows and fatherleſs children, who, as ſuch, are often recommended in ſcripture to our tendereſt care and kindneſs, and are ordinarily more compaſſionable objects, and ſtand more in need of help, than others in the low ranks of mankind: And they are

(*f*) Matt. xxvi. 11.

are the necessitous relicts and offspring of the servants of CHRIST, who, by their office, stood nearly related to him; and of some among them, that not only devoted their time and strength, labors and lives to the glory of GOD, the interest of the dear Redeemer, and the salvation of immortal souls; but were eminently great and good in the discharge of their sacred function, and in the whole of their religious and moral characters; yea, of some that, in all appearance, broke their constitutions and shortned their days, by means of their close application to study and preaching, with other ministerial labors; while, at the same time, they wanted proper animal refreshments under their wasting fatigues.

They chearfully shut themselves out from all the advantages of trade, or secular callings, by which they probably might have had as good opportunities of providing comfortably for their families, by the blessing of GOD on their abilities and diligence, as several others, that now make a good figure in the world. Many of them were trained up in literature for the service of the sanctuary, at the expence of their parents, and married gentlewomen of no despicable portions, which, together with what they had of their own, were abundantly sufficient to have set them up in business, with reputation and promising prospects; and yet, through the straitness of their income as ministers, and the multitude of their children, some of them have been rendered incapable of preserving what GOD had given them; and, having spent their All in the service of CHRIST and souls, left their widows and descendants to live upon alms. And though others might be introduced to the ministry at the private, or public charge of christian friends, or had but slender fortunes with their wives; yet when GOD had fitted them for, and brought them into that honorable office, some by one means, and others by another, their attention

to

to their LORD's work, and the credit of religion, put their families, as well as themſelves, generally ſpeaking, out of the ordinary courſe of laboring with their hands to get a ſubſiſtance, which other perſons of low life are, by their ſtations and education, naturally led into.

How much therefore muſt their poor widows be ſuppoſed to be uſually at a loſs to provide a tolerable maintenance by their own induſtry, who are unſkilled in, and unuſed to, the common methods of doing it! And how much harder muſt the trial of reduced circumſtances be to them, than to others, that never knew what a better way of living means! And as to their helpleſs ſons and daughters, how can they have any reaſonable proſpects of being reſcued from all the ſnares and terrors of poverty, as they grow up; unleſs they have better aſſiſtances, than their own deſtitute mothers can give them? And ſome of them are not only fatherleſs, but motherleſs too.

How touching muſt it be to ſee theſe dear ſurviving parts of them, that were ſo near to the LORD, and ſo uſeful in their day, ſink under all the infamy and diſtreſs, that indigence and contempt can pour upon them! And what generous ſoul muſt not be tenderly moved in a reflection, that they are ſubjected to all theſe calamities, by means of their pious huſbands and fathers chooſing, at all adventures, to ſerve GOD, according to the light of their own conſciences, in a way and ſtation, wherein they could expect neither the riches, nor the honors of this world; but juſt the contrary!

If therefore we have any ſympathizing emotions of human nature; any chriſtian compaſſion; any value for the Goſpel, or for the rights of conſcience and religious liberty; any regard to the memory of thoſe, that have ſtood up, and ſuffered for them; any concern to encourage others to do the like; any love to

our great and glorious LORD, for whoſe ſake the widows and orphans, now recommended to our piety and charity, have been reduced to miſerable circumſtances, that need, and cry aloud for our help; how can we ſhut up the bowels of our mercy and pity againſt them, or only wiſh their welfare, without contributing towards it, according to the ability GOD has given us?

Some public-ſpirited gentlemen, moved with a generous concern, have ſet on foot a ſubſcription for their relief, who have very little, if any ſupplies at all, from other funds; and GOD has inclined the hearts of many honorable perſons, of both ſexes, to come with exemplary generoſity into the laudable ſcheme. But, after all that they have done, and, I doubt not, are come hither with willing hearts, and with a bountiful hand to do, they need ſtill further aſſiſtances to carry it on with more extenſive and abiding advantage; and therefore earneſtly intreat the concurrence of others, either by ſubſcription, or preſent contribution, or any other donation, living or dying: They deſire this, not that they themſelves may *be eaſed, and others burdened* (*g*), but that there may be ſomething of an equality in the expence, and honor of this noble work.

And what reaſonable ground can there be for reluctance, or backwardneſs in any of us to ſcatter plentifully on ſuch a ſpeaking occaſion; ſince this is one way of increaſing our own ſtore, with a bleſſing upon it? Or what temptation can we have to withhold more than is meet; ſince this is one of the ways that tend to poverty? Where can we find a fitter ſet of objects for our merciful benevolence, than theſe, that now preſent to our notice? Or in what caſes can we make charitable exhibitions, with greater ſecurity of their being faithfully applied, to anſwer our good deſigns in them? We may be as thoroughly

(*g*) 2 Cor. viii. 13.

satisfied about this, as we can be in any thing of a like nature: For the disposal of this charity is put into the hands of such worthy gentlemen of figure and character, as the whole society of subscribers themselves choose, at their annual meetings: And it is but a piece of justice to say that, as far as ever I could observe, or learn, they who, from time to time, have hitherto given themselves the trouble of managing it, have made their distributions with great impartiality, care and discretion, according to the best accounts they could get of person's wants, without any respect to different parties, or denominations of protestant-dissenters. They hereby have caused the hearts of many ministers widows and children to rejoice, and bless GOD, and pour out their prayers for them, and for those, that have enabled them so seasonably to supply their necessities.

Let us therefore now, upon principles of faith and love, and with sincere aims at the glory of GOD, and the good of our fellow-creatures, and fellow-christians, exert ourselves, according to our respective abilities, with a generous emulation to exceed one another in this momentous service, that we may practically and affectionately *provoke unto love, and to good works* (*h*). And when, at the breaking up of this assembly, we come to the plates, let us *give, not grudgingly or of necessity*, remembering that *God loves a chearful giver* (*i*); and let us say in our hearts, with grateful and adoring wonder, as *David* did, on occasion of the rich presents that were made for the temple, *Who are we, O Lord, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee; and of thine own have we given thee* (*k*).

(*h*) Heb. x. 24. (*i*) 2 Cor. ix. 7.
(*k*) 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Reformation upon the Gospel Scheme.

Preached at *Salters-Hall*, on *Monday*, *June* 30, 1735, to the SOCIETIES for Reformation of Manners.

HEB. IX. 10.

——*Until the time of reformation.*

OF all the reformers that have appeared in the world, there never were any comparable to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great Apostle and High-priest of our profession; and of all the schemes of reformation that have ever been advanced, none are worthy to be named the same day with his. Neither the celebrated * *Numa*, *Lycurgus*, *Solon*, *Confucius*,

* *Numa* was the second king of the *Romans*, who instituted many sacred ceremonies, and enacted useful laws; and to give them the greater credit with the people, pretended that he received them from the nymph *Ægeria*, who recommended them as most acceptable to the gods. *Lycurgus* was the famous *Lacedemonian* lawgiver, who reformed the government, enacted good laws, and pretended to a divine sanction for them. *Solon* was one of the seven wise men of *Greece*, who, being governor of *Athens*, abrogated *Draco*'s cruel

Confucius, nor any other among the heathens, no, nor even *Moses* himself, the inspired prophet and law-giver of *Israel*, could ever pretend to a dignity and ability like our Savior's, who *was God manifested in the flesh* (*a*), or to an attempt so excellent and successful as his, who gives life and efficacy to all that is worthy to be called a reformation, as he is *head over all things to the church*, and *is ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things* (*b*).

What a refined and perfect scheme of doctrine did he publish and injoin! what a clear light did he diffuse through the minds of his followers! and what a surprising alteration did he make in the world, which lay in wickedness at the time of his appearing in flesh! What a spiritual, reasonable and holy service did he set up among the *Jews*, instead of their carnal ordinances and figurative institutions, and instead of their corrupt traditions! and how prevalent was his Gospel to reclaim some of the most obstinate among them, and to triumph in its glorious conquests over all the secular interests and opposition of *Gentile* nations! Where can we find an account of such wonderful changes in the religious and moral temper and behaviour of mankind, in all the volumes of sacred or civil records, of antient or modern date, as are collected in one short epitome, chiefly of the *Acts* of two of CHRIST's Apostles, as a specimen of what was done by the rest, within the compass of about thirty years after his ascension to heaven?

There you see that these Apostles themselves became quite other men than they were before: The Apostle of the circumcision was no longer weak or timorous in the cause of GOD and goodness, or aiming

laws, and enacted better in their stead. And *Confucius* was a *Chinese* Philosopher, whose great abilities in politics and morals gave him a great influence in the establishment of their laws; and he is still held in vast veneration among that people; though they do not idolize him, he having opposed that doctrine.

(*a*) 2 Tim. iii. 16. (*b*) Eph. i. 22. and iv. 10.

ing at temporal dominion and worldly grandeur; but was bold and resolute, bravely exposing himself to hardships and sufferings for the honor of JESUS and the salvation of men: And the Apostle of the *Gentiles* was no longer raging with fury against the church, and violating all the laws of religion and humanity in cruel persecutions; but became meek and merciful, and trod in the steps of his great LORD and master, who went about doing good. And there you see how the word of the LORD ran and was glorified; what numerous converts were made among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to the overthrow of the superstitions of the one, and the abominable idolatries of the other, together with all the errors and prejudices, lusts and passions, immoralities and profaneness of both. This is the time of reformation pointed to in our text, as the fruit of the priesthood of CHRIST, who *entred once by his own blood into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*, as it follows in the next verses.

This reformation gathered strength, and spread its vital powers for several ages through the nations of the earth; but there was afterwards a gradual decline, by means of the corruptions of men, till at length an antichristian spirit and temper defaced the simplicity of the Gospel, and the complicated abominations of popery, in doctrine and practice, exalted themselves upon its ruins: However, a little above two centuries ago this Gospel, attended with the power of GOD's Spirit, displayed its illustrious light and virtues again in the protestant reformation; then a new face appeared upon the religion and morals of the people, to the honor of GOD, the benefit of human society, and the salvation of multitudes who were turned to the LORD. Whilst the first principles of this reformation subsisted and prevailed, immorality and profaneness were put to the blush, and forced to hide their heads in a corner; religion was in fashion, and wickedness was accounted, what

it is, the worst of reproach. But, as the fact appears to me, when the purity of the Gospel came to be corrupted, a degeneracy in practice ensued, and gradually sunk into the various forms of depraved manners, which have been the just complaint of good men for many years past, and are the growing burden and disgrace of the present age.

To oppose this swelling tide, several worthy gentlemen formed themselves into a society, under the patronage of Queen *Mary*, of glorious memory, in the year 1691 *. From this original we may date the societies for reformation of manners, which continue to this very day, and which consist of generous public-spirited protestants of all denominations, who, breaking through their lesser differences, unite like christians in the common cause of GOD and religion: And as they are sensible that all their own attempts will prove unsuccessful unless GOD be with them, they have ordered a religious solemnity twice in the year, to implore his blessing on their righteous design, and to subserve it by suitable instructions, encouragements and enforcements from the sacred oracles. Their commands have now put the honor of this important service upon me; may GOD enable me to answer the present call of his providence, with some advantage to the noble cause they are engaged in!

What I would attempt on this occasion, is,

I. To state the notion of reformation.

II. To shew the advantages of the Gospel scheme to promote it. And,

III. To point out some proper methods of improving this scheme for the reformation we are aiming at; which may serve for a practical improvement of the subject.

We will begin with the first of these, which is,

I. Briefly to state the notion of reformation.

The

* See the Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, page 6.

The word (Κατόρθωσις) rendered reformation in our text, signifies a correcting, or setting things to-rights that were out of order before, and directing them to their proper scope and end; and the reformation here intended relates to such a regulation of doctrine, worship, discipline and obedience, in religious concerns, as makes a happy and holy change in the heart and life.

All things were defective and out of order when our Savior appeared to set up a new dispensation of grace; the worship of God had very much consisted in ceremonial and typical institutions, which as they sanctified to the purifying of the flesh for legal cleansing, are called *carnal ordinances*; these were abused and perverted by the additions of men, and the principles and manners of the people were grosly corrupted: But Christ came to fulfil the antient types, to throw off human impositions, to establish a more pure and spiritual worship and government, and to give a system of doctrines, which, by the power of his Spirit, should make a blessed alteration in the church and in the world. Then was *the judgment of this world, and the prince of this world was cast out* (*c*); a reformation was set on foot, Satan was dethroned, and the last and best dispensation was introduced for raising up a kingdom of grace and holiness, which is to continue without any other to succeed it to the end of time: hence it is called *a kingdom which cannot be moved*, and it contains provisions of *grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear* (*d*).

But the reformation, which the present occasion calls us to consider, most directly relates to a regulation of the external conduct of life; and yet as this will be attended with insuperable difficulties, and the corruptions of mankind will prove too hard for all human laws and restraints, unless there be a change upon the heart, it is very necessary to take this into

(*c*) John xii. 31. (*d*) Heb. xii. 28.

the account; which leads us to the next branch of our discourse, and that is,

II. To shew the advantages of the Gospel scheme, to promote a reformation in the heart and life.

And concerning this, we may observe the following things.

1. It represents the atonement of CHRIST, as the ground or basis of reformation.

I the rather begin with this, because it is the chief argument which our Apostle labors in this epistle, and leads our thoughts to in the next verses to our text, where he speaks of *Christ's being come* as *an high priest*, and of his *having obtained eternal redemption for us by his own blood*, when *through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God*, that he might *purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God* (*e*). Upon man's apostasy from GOD, all holy intercourse was cut off between them, and all grace was forfeited, whereby the sinner might be enabled to return to him; divine justice might have seized upon the transgressor, and insisted that he should die for his iniquity, and divine mercy might have withdrawn so as never to influence and accept his return; and what must have been the consequence of this, but that we should have been as irreclaimable from our evil ways as the devils themselves? But our *Emmanuel* has appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that an honorable way might be opened for communications of divine favor to us, and for our effectual and acceptable return to GOD through him; for *he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God* (*f*), in a way of obedience and acceptance here, and in a way of compleat enjoyment hereafter; and he *gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works* (*g*).

But

(*e*) Heb. xii. 11, 12, 14. (*f*) 1 Pet. iii. 18.
(*g*) Tit. ii. 14.

But besides this great design of his death for the conversion and salvation of a peculiar people, GOD was thereby so far reconciled to the whole human race, as to preserve it from utter confusion, and to bestow upon all mankind such common gifts of moral goodness as are necessary for the benefit of human society. " In this respect, says an excellent writer (*b*), " CHRIST upholds all things by his mediatory as well " as divine power (*i*), which else would have sunk " into the abyss: By virtue of this mediation, some " power is given back to man, as a new donation; " yet not so much as that he is able by it to regene- " rate himself; and whatever power man has, is " originally from this cause, and grows not up from " the stock of nature, but from common grace; " hereby those divine sparks in their understandings, " and whatever is morally praise-worthy in them, is " kept up by the grace of GOD; which was the " cause that CHRIST, *by the grace of God, tasted* " *death for every man* (*k*); or, as this author had be- " fore expressed it, in this sense he may be said to " taste death for every man; whereby the Apostle " seems to intimate, that by this grace, and by this " death of CHRIST, any remainders of that honor " and glory wherewith GOD crowned man at first, " are kept upon his head, as will appear if you con- " sider the eighth *Psalm*, whence the Apostle cites " these words, which are the ground of his discourse " of the death of CHRIST."

Without this appeasing death of the Son of GOD, our apostate world would have sunk in its own ruins, and there would have been no room for a reformation; but this has laid a foundation for it, that by divine aids the peace and order of human society may be maintained in a regulation of its manners, and that many sons may be brought to glory; hence natural virtue, as well as special grace, is called the gift of GOD,

(*b*) Charnock, vol. 2. edit. 2d. page 105.
(*i*) Heb. i. 3. (*k*) Ibid. ii. 9.

God, as the Apostle, speaking of *continence*, says, *every man has his proper gift of God* (*l*); and our Lord tells us, that they only *to whom it is given* (*m*), could receive a suggestion, which the disciples had made against marrying.

2. The Gospel scheme gives us the most excellent plan of righteousness, as the rule of reformation.

It has furnished us with the finest draught of morals that ever was seen in the world; and all our modern deists, however they reproach it, are beholden to this for their more refined systems of morality, than the wisest of the heathens could ever work up. It explains the duties of the eternal law of nature, in their utmost spirituality and widest extent; and divinely inforces their obligations by the immediate authority of Christ. Here, as the doctrines of religion toward God, so the doctrines of self-government, and of righteousness, and goodness toward men, and every personal, social, and public virtue, are set out with vast variety and exactness. Here every thing is prescribed that is worthy of human nature in its own constitution, and in all its relations to God, and fellow-creatures. There is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it condemns, from the highest to the lowest instances of each that can be imagined; for the Gospel of the *grace of God teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world* (*n*); and that *whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise*, we should *think of these things* (*o*), so as to observe and practise them.

Here we are called to humility, meekness and patience, temperance and sobriety, self-denial and chastity, even in our inmost thoughts, as well as outward behaviour: Here we are obliged to a regulation of all our passions and appetites, even unto the

(*l*) 1 Cor. vii. 7.
(*m*) Matt. xix. 11.
(*n*) Tit. ii. 12.
(*o*) Phil. iv. 8.

the suffering of injuries with patience, forgiving of enemies, and praying for them that despitefully use us; and to all dispositions and acts of love and charity, of brotherly-kindness, courteousness and beneficence, of mercy, fidelity and righteousness; or, in a word, of doing to others as we would that in like circumstances they should do to us: And here holy zeal and courage for GOD and religion, resignation to his will, a manly behaviour, and proper diligence in our respective callings, together with all the duties which result from the various relations of life, such as neighbours and acquaintance, friends and foes, rich and poor, parents and children, husbands and wives, brethren and sisters, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, are explained, recommended and inculcated upon us.

And on the other hand, all their contrary vices are exposed in their odious forms, and strictly forbid; such as wrath, anger, clamor and evil-speaking, with all malice and revenge, cursing and profane swearing, and the like. Here all rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, fornication and uncleanness, adultery, effeminacy and the monstrous unnatural wickedness of sodomitical practices, are severely censured: And here are prohibitions of all hypocrisy and pusillanimous fear, fretting and murmuring at GOD's disposals, extortions and oppressions, lying and stealing, knavery and cheating, hatred, variance, emulations, envyings and murders, and every kind of injury to the persons, reputation, liberty and property of others.

All these things, as every one that reads the new testament may see, are laid down in a clear and easy light, and our obligations to square our conduct by them, are put upon the plain and well attested authority of GOD, which injoins or forbids them: They are not left to work their way to our minds and consciences by the labored deductions of our own thoughts concerning the fitness and reasons of things, which

which is a more tedious way of being convinced of them; and which, in many instances, not one in a hundred is capable of going into, or perhaps of seeing the force of; and concerning some of which there might have been endless disputes and different sentiments about their obligation; as was in fact the case among the heathen, who had not the benefit of a divine revelation: But the Gospel scheme places all these moral duties in a strong point of light; and after it has done so, our own judgment and conscience, unless dreadfully corrupted, cannot but yield their consent, that the law of GOD, about them, *is holy, just and good* (*p*); and that, as in their own nature they are good, so in their use *they are profitable to men* (*q*).

But divine revelation does not stop here, it goes much further still; it puts a religious respect upon every moral duty; in order to which, it not only represents them as the will of GOD, and lays an obligation upon conscience to perform them with a reference to his authority as enjoining them, but also to his glory as their highest end, and to his well-pleasedness with them through JESUS CHRIST our Savior. *We beseech and exhort you, brethren,* says the Apostle, *by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more; for ye know what commandment we gave you by the Lord Jesus, for this is the will of God even your sanctification* (*r*), &c. And *whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God* (*s*). And christians are called *a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ* (*t*).

The law of GOD has likewise, as appears by the foregoing account, a further reach than all the laws of men: These are only conversant about external actions,

(*p*) Rom. vii. 12.
(*q*) Tit. iii. 8.
(*r*) 1 Thess. iv. 1 – 7.
(*s*) 1 Cor. x. 31.
(*t*) 1 Pet. ii. 5.

tions, which are all that can fall under the cognizance of man; but GOD's law has a sovereignty over the inmost thoughts, designs and dispositions of the soul; it commands that they be clean, and makes us accountable for them to him, who is the only LORD of conscience, and searcher of the heart. And whereas the direct view of human laws, in commanding virtue and forbidding vice, chiefly refers to the good of the community, under the guardianship of the civil magistrate; the divine laws, by their hold upon conscience, most effectually answer that view, whilst they proceed upon still higher principles: They command all righteousness, and forbid all sin under the formal notion of their being so, and that because of their own excellence or deformity, their own correspondence or contrariety to the nature, authority and will of GOD, and their being honorable or dishonorable to him, and beneficial or injurious to ourselves, as well as others. And to shew that human nature is capable of the practice of all moral virtues, they have been exemplified with shining beauty, and to the utmost perfection in the temper and behaviour of the blessed JESUS, who *was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*; and have been exemplified in very remarkable degrees by his holy Apostles. What a perspicuous and extensive, what an engaging and awful, strong and binding plan of righteousness is this, to be the rule of all reformation of manners in ourselves or others!

3. The Gospel scheme leads us to the best means and assistances for reformation.

It is a constant monitor in our hands, to which we daily may and ought to have recourse, to shew us our way, and to impress our consciences with a sense of our obligations to walk therein. It confirms the original constitution of civil government, as the ordinance of GOD for the good order of society, and continues the rights and powers of magistracy to be

be *a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well* (*u*); and under this consideration of our rulers, it adds a demand of subjection to them for conscience-sake. It gives us rich advantages for a religious education as well as example; it has provided a standing ministry to explain and enforce its holy doctrines, and to remind us frequently of them, that we may be not only hearers of the word, but doers of the same; and it directs us to GOD in CHRIST, for his holy Spirit to make a change upon our hearts and ways, and to enable us to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

Our blessed Savior promised to send his Spirit to *reprove* or *convince the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment* (*x*); and the Gospel dispensation is by way of eminence called *the ministration of the Spirit* (*y*); he breathes in it and works by it, he owns and honors it with a gracious influence, and usually wrestles more or less with sinners that come under it, to bring them back to GOD. He often shews them their sin and danger, and their need of pardoning and recovering mercy; he often checks, and warns and wounds their spirits in reflection upon their evil ways, makes them afraid of persisting in them, and restrains them from many a practice of iniquity, which they had ventured upon, and otherwise would continue to indulge; and he sometimes makes them resolve to abandon their vicious courses, and to seek after GOD and CHRIST, heaven and holiness, that they may be converted and saved.

But alas! many of them so frequently, and at length so obstinately resist the Holy Ghost in all these motions upon their hearts, that he righteously takes his leave of them, and will no longer strive with them; and so they shut themselves out from all the benefit of the Gospel scheme for their reformation.

(*u*) Rom. xiii. 3, 4, 5. (*x*) John xvi. 7, 8.
(*y*) 2 Cor. iii. 8.

tion. However, there are others with whom he strives till he gets the mastery; he carries on their conviction by his word and providence to a thorough conversion; he humbles them for their sins, enables them to believe in CHRIST for the remission of them, and turns them from disobedience to the wisdom of the just; so that they are no longer the servants of sin, but the servants of righteousness to GOD; and they dare not sin, as they formerly used to do, because of the fear of GOD. They pass under the *washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost* (*z*); *their souls are purified in obeying the truth, through the Spirit* (*a*), and they *through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body and live* (*b*): He *purifies their hearts by faith* (*c*), and inspires them with that *love of God* which inclines them to *keep his commandments* (*d*), and not to think them grievous: And he continues a gracious influence to enable them to hold on in his ways: This makes duty our choice, the way of the LORD our delight, and every difficult self-denying service easy to us: This work of GOD's Spirit, by means of the Gospel, upon our hearts, changes us into new creatures, alters our principles and views, our resolution and taste, and draws after it a suitable alteration in the course of our lives; so that we detest and fly from the evil ways we formerly loved and practised, and on the contrary, esteem and pursue the ways of virtue and religion, which we before disrelished and neglected; and by the continued aids and assistances of the holy Spirit, we soon find that all wisdom's *ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* (*e*).

4. The Gospel scheme affords us the strongest motives and encouragements to a reformation.

If the common providential goodness of GOD leads to repentance, how much more must *the kindness and love*

(*z*) Tit. iii. 5.
(*b*) Rom. viii. 13.
(*d*) 1 John v. 3.
(*a*) 1 Pet. i. 22.
(*c*) Acts xv. 9.
(*e*) Prov. iii. 17.

love of God our Savior which has appeared toward man (*f*), and not toward the fallen angels. How inviting and engaging are Gospel-displays of the divine philanthropy! What strong attraction of the heart toward GOD is there in the rich discoveries he has made of his abounding grace to all sorts of sinners, and in the matchless love and tender compassion of a dying Redeemer, in proclamations of pardoning mercy to relenting rebels, and of the kindest entertainment to returning prodigals, and in the assurances the Savior has given, that *whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast him out!* And when such thoughts as these are set home upon the heart, by the Holy Ghost, who comes to glorify CHRIST, and to take of his things and reveal them to us, how do they melt and overcome it, and what powerful constraints have they upon us to love and live to GOD?

Though we have grievously sinned against him, yet a way is opened through the great propitiatory sacrifice, for an acceptable return to him; and though we are naturally prone to evil, and unable to recover ourselves, yet the purchase of CHRIST, and the grace of the Gospel, are encouraging grounds of hope for relief; for *where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds*; *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin*; and there are promises of the good Spirit of GOD, who takes pleasure in making an effectual change upon such as feel their need of him, and cannot be satisfied without him. Hence our LORD himself hath said, *Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you*; *for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened:* And for our further encouragement, he adds a beautiful illustration from earthly parents, saying, *If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him* (*g*)*?* And then as to the final issues

(*f*) Tit. iii. 4. (*g*) Luke xi. 9—13.

issues of things, we are assured, that he who has begun the good work will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST; and that to them *who have their fruit unto holiness, the end shall be everlasting life*, though not as the wages of their righteousness, in like manner as death is the wages of sin, yet as the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (*h*), according to his free promise on CHRIST's account, and the sure connections of his covenant.

On the other hand, another part of this scheme tells us, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men*; that *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; and that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; but that *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* (*i*). In short, it plainly tells us, that in the day of judgment GOD *will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil* (*k*).

And even as to this present life, if our time would allow, it were easy to shew, that the Gospel scheme confirms all that the light of nature and antient revelation suggest, and supplies additional evidence, that *destruction and misery are in the ways of sin*, and that *godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is*, as well as of that *which is to come:* It shews the conveniences and inconveniences, the joys and sorrows, the safety and the danger, the happiness and the miseries of these different courses

 respectively,

(*h*) Rom. vi. 22, 23.
(*i*) 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9.
(*k*) Rom. ii. 6—9.

respectively, even whilst we are here, as well as what must be expected hereafter. And so, with relation both to the present and future world, it touches the two grand springs of human action, our hopes and our fears, to influence us by them; it works upon our fears to keep us out of the way of sin, and upon our hopes to bring us into, and keep us in the way of duty, and thereby affords the most powerful motives and encouragements of every kind to a thorough reformation in heart and life. This leads us to the last general head, which I design as the application of the foregoing; and that is,

III. To point out some proper methods of improving this scheme for the reformation we are aiming at.

The best scheme in the world will be of no advantage, unless it be improved and applied to answer its beneficial design; and what remains, is to direct the method of doing this, which by the blessing of God may be effectual to promote the reformation so much needed among us, and so much desired and aimed at by the worthy gentlemen of the societies for reformation of manners, and by all that have a due concern for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. For this purpose I would suggest the following hints.

1. We should be deeply affected with a sense of the great degeneracies of the age which need to be reformed, and of the rich advantages of the Gospel scheme which encourage our hopes of a reformation.

Unless we are feelingly touched with a sense of these things, we shall have little concern about a reformation, little heart to endeavour after it, and little prospect of succeeding in it: The work, in my way of thinking, must begin here, if ever it comes to a good issue. The degeneracies of the age are too notorious to be concealed; and a short sketch of the advantages of the Gospel scheme for a recovery from them, has been attempted in this discourse. But I

am

am afraid that a disregard to this glorious scheme in some, and a contempt of it in others, has not a little contributed to a defeat of the hopes we might otherwise have had from it.

Some will submit to the authority of CHRIST only just as far as they like it; others would deprive us of the peculiar glories of his Gospel; and others would lead us into an indifference to all its distinguishing principles. How far each of these, though undesignedly, weaken the Gospel scheme for reformation, they would do well to consider. But there are still others, who either throw up the whole of christian religion, or else make a tool of it for indulging their own vicious inclinations, or for carrying on worldly views, to the total subversion of the design of this reforming scheme. The shocking errors of infidelity are making head against us on one hand, and the senseless errors of popery on the other: Among the friends of these two parties, some are laboring to unsettle our religious principles; and others to settle them by uniting us under a pretended infallible head: Some would entirely reject the authority of CHRIST, and others would impose the authority of anti-christ upon us; some treat the whole Gospel as a fable, and others would put us off with the most ridiculous legends instead of the Gospel of CHRIST: Some are endeavouring to bring us to no religion at all; and others to a religion as bad as none. What are the tendencies of these struggles, on one side and the other, but to downright scepticism? And if people once turn sceptics, they are in a fair way to be deists, or atheists, papists or debauchees, or any thing, to serve their own pride, or humor, irregular appetites, or secular views.

And alas! in what various shapes do impiety and immorality stain the consciences and characters, and threaten the ruin of a people which are called by CHRIST's name! How do profanations of the

LORD'S-DAY, a neglect of public, family and closet worship, and an irreverent and abusive treatment of the lovely and yet tremendous name of GOD abound in a christian nation! How do cursing and swearing, lying and cheating, luxury and extravagance, drunkenness, lewdness and debaucheries cause our land to mourn! What contempt of magistracy, and insults on public authority; and what horrid outrages and cruelties, robberies and murders, and even self-murders too, do we often hear of! How hardened and daring are many in the practice of all these, and numberless other abominations, even to a committing them with greediness, and without fear or shame! What vengeance may we not expect to burst upon our heads from heaven, if we continue to fill up the measure of our iniquity, according to the example of former nations, whom GOD has destroyed! And as many professing christians amongst us, who should stand in the gap to avert impending judgments, have gone too far into the provocations of the age, to bring them on; what but repentance and reformation can prevent them? *Except ye repent*, says the Savior himself, *ye shall all likewise perish* (*l*): And *if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God* (*m*)?

But how can we ever hope to be reduced from these detestable crimes and apostasies, and skreened from the vengeance they provoke, unless, through the merits of GOD's own Son, and by the aids of his holy Spirit, our hearts be divorced from sin, and engaged to have a respect unto all his commandments? In what other way can our grievous wound be cured? In this we may, and in this only we can, warrantably hope for it: If GOD, for CHRIST's sake, has not mercy upon us to animate our returns to him, we certainly shall remain impenitent and polluted; and sooner or later, GOD only knows how soon, we must

(*l*) Luke xiii. 5. (*m*) 1 Pet. iv. 17.

must perish in our sins: But blessed be his name, there is yet room in the Gospel scheme for hope, that we may be reformed and saved, if we do not continue obstinately to abuse it.

2. We should be earnest in prayer to GOD for his Spirit to reform us.

Without this, all our attempts will come to nothing: If we begin without GOD, we shall end without success; for as all iniquity and compliance with temptation is from ourselves, so *every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights:* And the way to obtain such gifts as we need, is *to ask them of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not* (*n*). We should ask them with all humility of mind, under a sense of our own insufficiency and unworthiness, with faith in the mercy, power and promises of GOD, and in the mediation of CHRIST, and with importunity and holy fervor, like necessitous and yet encouraged supplicants, that will not let him go till he has blessed us.

In this manner we should cry mightily to the LORD, and strive together and apart in our prayers to fetch down help from heaven; we should humbly implore a plentiful effusion of his Spirit, as a Spirit of truth and holiness, upon reforming societies themselves, and upon all ranks and degrees of men, whether they be more or less infected with the contagion of the age: We should beg that a right spirit may be given to such as profess to be engaged in reforming work, whether by their civil or sacred office, or by voluntary association; that they may be united together in love, and may have wisdom, zeal and courage, and a hearty concern for the glory of GOD, and the good of human society, with a tender compassion to immortal souls: And we should be earnest in our pleas that GOD would assist, and command a blessing upon their laudable endeavours, and that by their means a return to him may be as general as

(*n*) James i. 5, 17.

our revolt has been; and so iniquity may not be our ruin, but GOD may delight to dwell amongst us.

3. Every one should be seriously concerned about personal reformation upon the foot of the Gospel scheme.

As none of us are already perfect, or got beyond need of amendment, so we should not set about reforming work like heathens, who know nothing of CHRIST and the Gospel of the grace of GOD, or of the blessed Spirit and his promised aids, or of the hope of glory and the encouragements that arise from thence; but should set out upon the great principles of christianity, and take heed that we do not grieve the Spirit of GOD, and thereby defeat their happy effects upon us. We should labor after a true acquaintance with these principles, should consider their vast importance, and pursue their peculiar advantages for a reformation of the whole man, till we find that we are thoroughly moulded into that holy form of doctrine which is delivered to us in the word of GOD, and are enabled to depart from all iniquity. Every one, that is desirous of a reformation, should in this manner begin first at home, that we may be reformed one by one, till the good leaven shall spread itself through the whole community: For example is the life of counsel and precept; and when this shines in a man's own character, it gives a decorum to the execution of righteous laws against vice and profaneness, and it keeps him in countenance, and gives him weight in all his wise, compassionate and faithful strivings against sin in others.

But what signifies bewailing their abominations, and endeavouring to reform them, if we ourselves are still in our sins, and are unaffected with our own condition, and lead the van in the like or some other instances of immorality? With what heart, or with what face can we set about reforming others, or what likelihood is there that we shall be faithful and vigorous

gorous in our attempts for it, or that GOD will own us in them; or of what advantage will it be to us in the great day of account, even to have had a hand in reforming the world round about us, in case we continue to love and live in the practice of the wickedness, from which they are recovered? If we our selves are strangers to faith in CHRIST, and repentance toward GOD, to a work of heart-changing grace, and a regular course of life, all will turn to our own confusion at last. We must first cast the beam out of our own eye, as ever we would see how to help the eyes of others; and if we are careless how things stand with ourselves, while we shew abundance of zeal to correct what is amiss in others, we cannot answer it to GOD, to them, or to our own consciences; but must one day feel the stinging reproach, which the Apostle justly urged upon the vain-glorious *Jew*, who *made his boast of God*, and confidently called himself *a guide of the blind, and a light of them which are in darkness: Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou which preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you* (*o*).

4. We should take the best care and pains we are capable of, in our respective stations, to promote the reformation of others together with ourselves.

Though we must begin with ourselves in so excellent and necessary a work as this, we should not stop there; but as we are fellow-creatures, fellow-members of civil society, and fellow-protestants and christians, we should study and labor for the good of others, and should spare no time, nor thought, nor pains, nor cost, consistent with our circum-

(*o*) Rom. ii. 17—24.

stances in life, to promote it. And our way of managing this important design should be with such condescension and humbleness of mind, and with such prudence and caution, tenderness and compassion, together with a becoming resolution and faithfulness, as may convince every offender, that it is not out of pride or passion, humor or prejudice, self-interest or self-applause, nor from any contempt of them, or ill-will to them, that we trouble ourselves about them; but that it is meerly from a conscience toward GOD, and a concern for his glory, and from a sincere aim at their own good and the good of the community.

To make this the more evident, the gentlest methods of kindness and persuasion should be tried, as long as there is any room for them; and our first efforts should be among the children and servants of our own families, and among those that we are most conversant with, or have the greatest interest in, or influence upon. And where-ever we have opportunity for it, our attention should be turned especially to the rising generation, to form their temper and conduct while their hearts are yet tender, and before they have taken the infection of bad company, or have contracted strong habits of wickedness, and are hardned in it. *Principiis obsta:* Watch the first sproutings and appearances of evil, and labor to root them out, before they have got an establishment in the heart, and become familiar in practice; for when once the taste for loose company and defiling pleasure becomes eager and confirmed, it will hardly admit of restraint; and according to the ordinary methods of divine and human procedure, it is found to be with terrible convulsions, if ever, changed. *Can the* Ethiopian *change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil* (*p*). We have heard how we are to deal with GOD

(*p*) Jer. xiii. 23.

God in our prayers about a reformation; and every one who fears his name, of whatsoever profession or character he be in life, should heartily join in doing what he can with man towards it, in a dependence upon divine grace to assist and accept the honest well-meaning service, and to crown it with success.

In subservience to this great design (*abstit invidia*) the peculiar province of the ministers of Christ is to explain and inculcate every part of the Gospel scheme; to direct their hearers to the grand springs of reformation; to lay out the rule of duty in all its branches; to inforce the necessity of observing it; and to recommend the encouragements there are to attempt it, as they find them in the word of God. They are to preach the terrors of the law, and the endearments of the Gospel; to shew men their transgressions, and their only remedy; to let them know, that if they go on in their trespasses, they must unavoidably perish; but that there is merit enough in the blood of Christ, for the pardon of the very worst of returning sinners, and power enough in his Spirit to enable them to return; and so they are to call them to faith and repentance, whilst a door of hope, through Jesus Christ, stands open in the Gospel before them, *as he is exalted to be a prince and a savior, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins* (*q*). They are to paint out the awful solemnities that relate to death and judgment, heaven and hell, and the miseries or happiness in this world, and especially for ever in the next, that are entailed upon the sinner's persisting in his evil ways, on one hand, or upon his turning from them to God, through the only Mediator, on the other: And they are to shew them the necessity of divine grace to make an effectual change upon them, and of the Redeemer's righteousness to recommend them to God's acceptance, that they may be hereby put upon going into the Gospel method for a recovery, and may seek after

(*q*) Acts v. 31.

after such a reformation, as begins in the heart, and spreads through the life.

The peculiar province of the legislature is, to enact such laws for the honor of GOD, and the good of the community, as may be best adapted to the restraint of vice in those, who, having no fear of GOD before their eyes, can only be awed and influenced by the fear of the civil magistrate. Blessed be GOD, we have many excellent laws for these purposes already: But there is room to wish that he might put it into the hearts of the legislative powers of this kingdom, still further to improve them, by adding such others, with respect to masquerades, plays, and disorderly houses, and other nuisances, as may put a stop to their defiling influence; and by giving more power for an easy execution of such good laws as are in force. By this means the worthy societies for reformation of manners, and any others who are capable and inclined to see that the laws be duly executed, would not struggle with so many difficulties as now encumber them.

The special province of civil magistrates is, faithfully to execute our good laws against immorality and profaneness; and not to brow-beat or discountenance such as would bring criminals to justice, nor make their work more tedious, expensive, or laborious, than necessity requires: On the other hand, it greatly redounds to the honor of those who are in authority, to encourage them in it with commendation and dispatch, and to act up to the dignity of their own office-characters, as the ministers of GOD, *who are not to bear the sword in vain* (*r*); but are sent by him for *the punishment of evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well* (*s*). By this means, our excellent laws would be no longer lifeless, impotent forms, as they have been in too many instances of late; but living oracles, that speak with vigor, and will be obeyed.

The

(*r*) Rom. xiii. 4. (*s*) 1 Pet. ii. 14.

The common province of all these ranks and orders of persons, and of every one who wishes well to a reformation, is to do their utmost, according to their respective stations and capacities, to subserve the design of the christian dispensation, and of the laws of our land, for the suppressing of impiety and vice, and for the encouragement of religion and virtue. They should do this singly, or in conjunction with others, as opportunities offer, laboring to strengthen the hands of one another, and particularly of the worthy gentlemen, who have formed themselves into societies for the reformation of manners, and have taken great pains in the momentous service; and thanks be to GOD, it has not been without some good success.

These things are indeed deplorably bad still, but must have been much worse, were it not for their indefatigable labor, by night and by day, to rout the nests of debauchery, and thin the swarms of notorious criminals, that infest our streets. I find * the number of persons, which they have been concerned in prosecuting in or near *London* for debauchery and profaneness, within the compass of the last forty years, is computed at ninety-nine thousand, three hundred and eighty; and in the last year but one, for lewd and disorderly practices, and sabbath-breaking, four hundred and ten. The services for the last year are not come to my hands. In this good work they have encountred many difficulties not only from the offenders themselves, but even from some that should have encouraged the reformers: They have exposed their persons to danger, have gone through evil report, as well as good report, for their fidelity; and have been loaded with injurious reproaches, as if they made a gain of godliness. But on the other hand, I am well assured that it is a matter of great expence,

* *Drew*'s Sermon to the Societies at St *Mary le Bow*, *January* 27, 1734.

expence, and no manner of profit to themselves; that they have only their trouble and loss of time for their charges and pains; that they do not so much as take, or know of any, who act for them, that do ever take to themselves the moiety of the mulcts or fines, which the law allows to such as convict offenders, but give all away to the poor; and that they never suffer a bribe to blind their eyes, or to buy off a prosecution, or procure an escape.

How kind and self-denying, how honorable and generous is all this, and how deserving to be applauded, encouraged and assisted by all good men! Persons of a vigorous active temper should make themselves members of these societies, to join with them in their noble public-spirited work: Persons of substance in the world should bear a part in the credit of these societies, and assist them with their purses, that the necessary charges of prosecutions, of distributing good books, and of providing other means for carrying on their important design, may not be too heavy a burden upon the societies themselves: Persons of observation should furnish them with accounts, especially of gross delinquents, should put them into proper methods of apprehending them, and bringing them to justice, and should be assistant to them in it: And every one, who would favor their righteous cause, should recommend them and their labors in their prayers to GOD.

And you, gentlemen, of these societies, who are embarked in this great, and good, and honorable work, acquit yourselves like men and christians; be courageous for the LORD your GOD, and set your faces as a flint against all the hardships, opposition, and reproaches, you may meet with in it. And, as I perceive you find yourselves cramped with inextricable difficulties in some prosecutions, according to the laws as they now stand; perhaps if you were to unite in an humble application to parliament, their

their wisdom and goodness might find ways to remove them: In the mean while, make the best of all the good laws, which favor the design of your valuable association, and see that they be well executed. You are engaged in a glorious cause; it is the cause of GOD and religion, the cause of christianity and humanity, the cause of equity and mercy to your country, and the cause of the kindest beneficence to every one that shall be reclaimed, and of necessary justice to them that continue obstinate in their wickedness; and while you are faithful in it, GOD and all good men will own and honor you, however others may scandalize and oppose you.

Go on then, in the name, and in the strength of the LORD GOD, to put a stop to the horrible profanations of the LORD'S-DAY. Here is the floodgate, which lets in all the impieties that rush upon us, and swell to an overflowing outrage: To shut up this, is doing business by wholesale; and therefore I beseech you, sirs, to try the utmost that can be done to clear the streets of shoe-blackers, and the public-houses of crowding guests, who are profaning GOD's time, if not abusing themselves there; and to overturn the stalls and baskets of the costermongers in the places of public resort, which, to the shame of our christian profession, are much more thronged on the LORD'S-DAY than on other days: And do not forget the shops of butchers, barbers, and other traders, who run away with the profits of conscientious observers of the sabbath, and put some of them under a temptation to violate their own consciences, that they may not lose their share of business. It is pity that vice should be thus rewarded, and virtue put under such discouragements; many honest and industrious tradesmen would be very thankful to GOD and you, if by a due execution of the laws, you could but put them on a level in this point with those that make no conscience of keeping the sabbath.

Go

Go on likewise, and the LORD be with you, to exert yourselves every day against gaming-houses, and all the scandalous numbers and irregularities of cellars, and of public and private gin-shops; against night-walkers and sturdy beggars; against all profane cursing and swearing, drunkenness and debaucheries; and in a particular manner against the monstrous unnatural sin, and all the filthy practices that tend towards it, which was one of the blackest brands of infamy on the worst of heathens, and brought the heaviest vengeance on *Sodom*, and which is shocking to common modesty to think or speak of, but which nevertheless (if general rumor may be credited) is a growing abomination amongst us. And let me intreat you, gentlemen, to keep a watchful eye upon popish emissaries, priests and jesuits, that they may not break our laws, by propagating their anti-christian, treasonable, cruel, and immoral schemes, and by making their proselytes rebels to CHRIST, and to our gracious and only rightful sovereign King *George*.

To conclude, let me earnestly beseech you, sirs, in the name of the LORD, to look carefully to your own hearts and ways in this, and all your other management; and to take to yourselves what has been said about personal reformation. See that you yourselves be christians indeed, that you are in a state of favor with GOD through faith in his beloved Son, and that your principles, motives and views are set right by regenerating grace; that whilst you attempt the reformation of others, none of you yourselves may be found cast-aways at last. Do not go forth in your own spirit, but look upwards for help from heaven; do not think to make a merit with GOD by the utmost that you can do in reforming-work; but count yourselves after all unprofitable servants; and place your trust in CHRIST and his righteousness alone, for the acceptance of your persons and of all your

your labors of love for his name's sake: You can lose nothing by this; for I am very sure that such an humble self-disclaiming temper of mind can be no bar against the acceptableness of the best of your works in the final judgment; but I think no person can be sure that they will not be very unacceptable without it; and I would fain have none of you, gentlemen, disappointed then. But if in the manner which has been recommended, you vigorously apply yourselves to your duty; remember for your encouragement, that whatsoever may be the event to others, *great is your reward in heaven*; even that reward of grace, which GOD has promised in his sure and everlasting covenant, and which CHRIST will adjudge you to in the last day, when he shall say, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (*t*).

(*t*) Matt. xxv. 21.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

The Minister's Plea for the People's Prayers.

Preached at the Separation of the Reverend Mr *John Halford*, to the Pastoral-Office in the Church of CHRIST at *Horselydown*, *October* 24, 1734.

1 THESS. V. 25.

Brethren, pray for us.

OF all the duties of our holy profession, none is more directly an act of divine worship, or more essential to the life, the pleasure and the power of religion, than prayer. It is a natural duty, and is enforced by the special command of GOD; it suits our present state of exigence, and is honorable unto him; it is a becoming acknowledgment of our daily wants, of our entire dependence upon him, and of our perpetual obligations to him; it carries on a holy correspondence and communion with him, gives an easy vent to the inmost groanings and desires of our hearts, and is a channel of his freest commu-

communications of blessings to us through JESUS CHRIST our Savior: It is the breath, the action, and the delight of the new creature, under the influence of the Spirit of grace and supplication; and, when it is offered up with faith and fervor in the name of CHRIST, it hath great power with GOD, and is of rich advantage not only to ourselves, but to those likewise whom he lays upon our hearts to pray for.

Hence in our private retirements we should give our christian friends and brethren, our acquaintance and kindred according to the flesh, and our very enemies, a place in our addresses to the throne of grace; and in social worship christians should unite with one heart and soul in prayer with, and for one another, that the communion of saints, as well as communion with GOD in CHRIST by the Spirit, may be maintained in that duty. Ministers should pray for their people, and people for their ministers; none are too low and inconsiderable to be admitted to a share in our petitions; and none are so high and eminent as not to need it. The great Apostle was deeply sensible of this, and therefore, as he abounded in prayer for the churches, he often bespoke a return of the like for himself: And if he valued their prayers, and had such a sense of their importance to himself, whose attainments were so great, of how much more value and importance are yours, and how much more needful are they, for the ministers of CHRIST in our day, who in every thing come vastly behind the very least of the Apostles?

As therefore on this solemn occasion some of us, the ministers of CHRIST, are called together to recommend you of this church, and your reverend pastor, to the grace and blessing of GOD; let me beg of you in return to pray for him and us, for all that labor in the word and doctrine, and have the oversight of CHRIST's flock. You will allow me to bring in myself and them, together with him, since

the Apostle took in his fellow-laborers with himself, when he said in our text, *Brethren, pray for us.* In these words we have an affectionate appellation, and a serious request.

1. An affectionate appellation; and that is, *Brethren.*

The persons particularly intended by this title were not ministers, but private christians, the members of the church at *Thessalonica*, even all of them, for whom the Apostle says, he and *Silvanus*, and *Timotheus gave thanks to God always, making mention of them in their prayers*, chap. i. 1, 2. These were the brethren he wrote to, inclusive of the women of the church, for they share with the men in spiritual privileges and obligations; he wrote this Epistle, and all along spoke to these, and he, though the chief of the Apostles, was not ashamed to call them *Brethren*; and good reason why he should not, since the LORD of glory had so far condescended, as not to be ashamed to own them under this relation to himself.

All the saints and faithful in CHRIST JESUS, whether ministers or others, are brethren to CHRIST, who is their elder brother, and to one another in him, by virtue of their peculiar and yet joint relation to him, and interest in him. They are children of the same father, who has begotten and adopted them; they are brethren in the same family, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance; and it is a greater blessing and honor to be brethren, than to be servants in his house: A servant may be turned out again, and will be so, if he is no more than a servant; but every real child of GOD shall abide in his house for ever, he shall never be turned out of house and home, never be shut out of heaven and turned into hell.

It is indeed an additional privilege, honor and delight to be servants, as well as children in CHRIST's family, because of the great and good master, and the noble work that his servants are more peculiarly conversant with, and employed about, as the chief and

and daily buſineſs of their lives: But yet they ſhould not forget the common relation they ſtand in to CHRIST, and to GOD, and all his children through him, which is their fundamental bleſſedneſs and glory, and without which their character, as his ſervants, will turn to their everlaſting confuſion and diſgrace. Nor ſhould they be aſhamed, or unwilling, on any account whatſoever, to own the meaneſt in CHRIST's family as brethren; but ſhould love, honor and embrace them as ſuch, ſhould be tender towards them, and ſympathize with them, ſhould rejoice in their joys, and mourn over their ſorrows, ſhould pity and pray for them in all their weakneſſes and infirmities, temptations and troubles, and ſhould do them all the good they can. This was the heart of a brother, which the Apoſtle bore to his dearly beloved *Theſſalonians*, and he at every turn, in every chapter, called them *Brethren*, to let them know it, and to engage the like heart in them towards him again. Hence, we have,

2. His ſerious requeſt to them; and that is, *pray for us.*

He looked upon them as *brethren, that were choſen and beloved of the Lord* (*a*), as well as of himſelf. He loved them becauſe they were *beloved of God*; and he knew that, as ſuch, they had an intereſt at the throne of grace, ſo great an intereſt, that *whatſoever they ſhould aſk the Father in Chriſt's name*, with faith in him, according to the will of GOD, *it ſhould be given*, becauſe *the Father himſelf loved them* (*b*), as our LORD told his diſciples. And ſince they were of ſuch high account with GOD, and had his ear, as his beloved children, the Apoſtle thought it worth his while to engage them to think of him, and his fellow-laborers in the LORD, at their beſt ſeaſons, to carry them in their hearts before GOD, and to plead for them, in their daily applications to him. He would not by any means be left out of the prayers

(*a*) Chap. i. 4. and 2 Ep. ii. 13. (*b*) John xvi. 23, 27.

of the saints, and therefore bespoke them, saying, *Brethren, pray for us.* q. d. "I earnestly entreat you, "by all the bonds and endearments of an affectionate "brother, that whenever you go to GOD for your- "selves, whether alone or in company, in your clo- "sets, families, or church-assemblies, you would "not forget us; and when you have most of the "spirit of prayer, and get nearest to GOD by faith, "and are most free and enlarged in your commu- "nion with him, and humble boldness at his throne, "I beseech you then improve your interest with him "for us."

This importunate request of the Apostle to them is ours to you, brethren, beloved of the LORD, to you of this church, and to all *that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Brethren, pray for us.* To help forward this design, I shall, by divine assistance,

I. Direct your prayers for your ministers, or tell you what we would desire you to beg of GOD for us; which at the same time will suggest to us the work and duty of our charge. And,

II. Offer some considerations to engage your prayers on our behalf; which will shew our need of them, and why we desire them.

I. Direct your prayers for your ministers, or tell you what we would desire you to beg of GOD for us; which at the same time will suggest to us the work and duty of our charge. And here,

1. *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may be furnished with all proper gifts and graces for our work.

Beg of GOD for us, that our own hearts may be seasoned with grace; that we may live under an awful and lively sense of GOD, of the truth, excellence and importance of christian religion, of the necessity and worth of a Savior, of the solemnity of our work, and of the reality of invisible things; and that we may have an experimental acquaintance with the power of godliness, may taste its noble pleasures,

and

and live under its sweet dominion, and like scribes well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven, may bring out of the treasure of our hearts *things new and old* (*c*), which we ourselves have been taught of GOD by his word and Spirit.

Pray that we may have a clear, extensive and judicious acquaintance with divine truths, and a capacity to explain, illustrate, and confirm them, to defend, recommend and enforce them; that we may be *able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gain sayers* (*d*); and that we may have lively affections, with a solid judgment, to direct its aim at the hearts and consciences of our hearers. Pray that we may be apt to teach in a proper connection of our ideas, and clear expressions of them, in suitable and scriptural language: that we may have a becoming presence of mind, an holy fortitude and courage for every service, to which CHRIST calls us, and may set out in it with such governing views, as are suitable to the spirituality of its nature and design. And pray that we may ever keep up a humbling sense of our own insufficiency, and an entire dependence upon CHRIST and his Spirit for all assistances in our holy ministrations, and so may *study to shew ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (*e*).

2. *Brethren, pray for us,* that we may be preserved from the defections of the age.

Bear us upon your hearts with serious concern before the LORD, that we may be *found in the faith, holding fast the faithful word, and nourished up in the words of faith* (*f*), *and of good doctrine, whereunto we have attained* (*g*); and that we may be kept from all the errors of the day; especially from such as strike at the foundation of the christians faith, hope, holiness and salvation, such as lie in opposition to the free and sovereign grace of GOD, to the infinite

(*c*) Matt. xiii. 52. (*d*) Tit. i. 9. (*e*) 2 Tim. ii. 15.
(*f*) Tit. i. 9, 13. (*g*) 1 Tim. iv. 6.

dignity of the person, offices, merit and righteousness of CHRIST, to the divine glory of the person and operations of the Spirit, and to the necessity of vital religion, of evangelical holiness and practical godliness, under the influence of the regenerating, and sanctifying Spirit.

Pray likewise that we may not degenerate into a carnal, worldly, sensual frame of heart, and course of life, into a light, loose and careless, vain, and sinful conversation, unbecoming our christian and ministerial characters, and reproachful to the sacred doctrine we preach. Pray that we may have a *good conscience in all things*, *willing to live honestly* (*h*), or in a decent, regular and becoming manner; that we may live our Sermons, and be *exemplary in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity* (*i*); that we may be *blameless, vigilant, sober and of good behaviour, lovers of hospitality, lovers of good men, just, holy and temperate* (*k*), *not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no strikers, not given to filthy lucre* (*l*); but that we may *have a good report of them which are without*, and may *flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness and peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart* (*m*).

Pray that *in all things* we may *shew ourselves patterns of good works*; *and in doctrine may shew uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned* (*n*); that we may *war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience*; that we may *take heed unto ourselves and to our doctrine, and continue in it* (*o*), and may *give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed*; but may *in all things approve ourselves as the ministers of God* (*p*), &c.

3. *Bre-*

(*h*) Heb. xiii. 18. (*i*) 1 Tim. iv. 12, 16.
(*k*) 1 Tim. iii. 2, 7. (*l*) Tit. i. 7, 8.
(*m*) 1 Tim. vi 11. and 2 Ep. ii. 22.
(*n*) Tit. ii. 7, 8. (*o*) 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.
(*p*) 2 Cor. vi. 3, 4.

3. *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may be helped to fulfil our miniſtry in the beſt manner.

Pray that we may have the preſence of GOD with us, freſh and plentiful unctions of the Spirit, and all gracious aſſiſtances from CHRIST, in our ſtudies, in our preaching and prayers, in the adminiſtration of the ſeals of the covenant, in our preſidings in church-affairs, in our viſiting the ſick, in our private applications to particular perſons, as occaſions may require, and in all our daily converſes; and ſo may find by happy experience that we are *ſtrong in the grace which is in Chriſt Jeſus* (*r*), and that he eminently makes good his promiſe to us, *Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world* (*s*).

Beg of GOD for us, that we may *give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine*, and may *not neglect the gift that is in us*, but may *meditate on the things of God, and give ourſelves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear to all*; that we may *ſtir up the gift of God which is in us* (*t*), and may *keep by the Holy Ghoſt, which dwelleth in us, that good thing which is committed to us* (*u*). And pray that we may be careful who we introduce into the miniſtry, that the ſame *things, which we have heard of* CHRIST and his Apoſtles, *may be committed to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo* (*x*). Plead for us, that we may be faithful to CHRIST and ſouls; may be full of holy zeal for his glory and tender compaſſion to them; may contend for the truths of the Goſpel with great earneſtneſs, and with the ſpirit of the Goſpel, *not lording it over God's heritage*, nor indulging *the wrath of man, which worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*; but may be ſerving the LORD with all humility of mind, ſpeaking the truth in love, and *in meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,*

(*r*) 2 Tim. ii. 1.
(*s*) Matt. xxviii. 20.
(*t*) 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14, 15.
(*u*) 2 Tim. i. 6, 14.
(*x*) 2 Tim. ii. 2.

and that they may recover themselves, or as it is in your margins, that they may *awake* ἀνανήψωσιν *out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will* (*y*).

Be earnest with God for us, that we may be *pastors after his own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding* (*z*); that we may keep close to his word, and may never *shun to declare the whole counsel of God*; that no doctrine or duty may be neglected and passed over in the course of our ministry; that the most useful and important may be most insisted on; that we may not feed you with unprofitable niceties, which minister questions unto vain jangling rather than godly edifying; and that we may labor diligently in our work, like persons who travail in birth till Christ be formed in our hearers, may *open our mouths boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel* (*a*), may be *instant in season and out of season* (*b*), may *reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine*, and may pursue the *end of the commandment, which is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned* (*c*).

Pray that integrity and uprightness may preserve us, that we may *renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully* (*d*); that we may not be as *many which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, we may speak in Christ* (*e*); and that, like the great Apostle, we may be able to say, *our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts; for neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory, neither*

(*y*) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.
(*a*) 1 Tim. i. 4, 6.
(*c*) 2 Tim. iv. 2. and 1 Ep. i. 5.
(*d*) 2 Cor. ii. 17.
(*z*) Jer. iii. 15.
(*b*) Eph. vi. 19, 20.
(*e*) Ibid. iv. 2.

ther of you, nor yet of others, but were gentle among you, even as a nurſe cheriſheth her children; ſo being affectionately deſirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you not the Goſpel of God only, but alſo our own ſouls, becauſe ye were dear unto us (*g*); with abundance more to the ſame purpoſe.

Pray that we may ever remember, that we receive our truſt from CHRIST, and are accountable to him; that neceſſity is laid upon us, yea, wo is unto us, if we preach not the Goſpel; that *it is required of ſtewards to be found faithful*, and that it ought to be *a very ſmall thing with us to be judged of man's judgment*, ſince *he that judges us is the Lord* (*h*). And pray that we may never be terrified by our adverſaries into a deſertion of CHRIST and his cauſe; but may ſtand ready to be *partakers of the afflictions of the Goſpel, according to the power of God*, whenever he may call us to them; that we may *endure hardneſs as good ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt* (*i*), and make full proof of our miniſtry, *through neceſſities and diſtreſſes, through honor and diſhonor, through evil report and good report* (*k*).

Pray that in the whole of our work and conduct, we may be *wiſe as ſerpents*, while we are *harmleſs as doves*; wiſe to win ſouls, and wiſe in applying ſuitably to all caſes, *giving to every one his portion in due ſeaſon, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wiſdom, that we may preſent them perfect in Chriſt Jeſus* (*l*). And pray that we may be prudent, as well as faithful, in the diſcharge of our truſt; that we may always go into ſuch meaſures, and manage them with ſuch a temper, as will not injure and expoſe the glorious cauſe we are concerned for, but will turn, by a divine bleſſing, to the glory of GOD and our Redeemer, to the advancement of the honor and intereſt of the Goſpel kingdom, in truth, holineſs, love and peace, and to the edification of the church.

(*g*) 2 Theſſ. ii. 3—8.
(*h*) 1 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4.
(*i*) 2 Tim. i. 2. and ii. 3.
(*k*) 2 Cor. vi. 4, 8.
(*l*) Col. i. 28.

church. *The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way*, and *the prudent man looks well to his going* (*m*). O pray, that, as CHRIST was to his Father in the days of his flesh, so we may be *his servants that shall deal prudently* (*n*); and that *God would open to us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, that we may make it manifest as we ought to speak* (*o*).

4. *Brethren, pray for us*, that our ministry may be accepted of GOD in CHRIST, and of his people.

Pray that we may study to shew ourselves approved of GOD, and may labor above all things else, to be accepted of him; that we may be indeed a sweet savor to GOD in CHRIST, both in those that are saved, and in those that perish; that he may smile upon us and our labors, and give testimony to the word of his grace; that, however we may be accounted of by man, we may be honorable in his sight; and that our upright aims at his glory and the good of souls, though attended with many infirmities, may be graciously accepted on CHRIST's account.

And pray that we may be approved of men in all those things, and those only, wherein we are accepted of GOD; that their prejudices may not hinder our usefulness to themselves or others; but that they may rejoice in our light, and that *by the manifestation of the truth, we may commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* Pray that our office may be neither set too high, nor sunk too low; but that we may be *accounted of as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* And O beg of GOD, that such spirituality and purity, evidence and power, may run through our ministrations and behaviour, as shall support the dignity of our character, as the ministers of CHRIST, and shall make our services acceptable to the saints, and particularly to them, who

(*m*) Prov. xiv. 8, 15. (*n*) Isa. lii. 13.
(*o*) Col. iv. 3, 4.

who are our charge, and among whom we more especially labor in the word and doctrine.

5. *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may be made successful in our work.

Wrestle with us in your prayers, that we may be directed in our studies, and public ministrations, to such subjects, as shall be most suitable to the state of the flock, and that GOD would bring such souls under the word, as he will teach to profit by it. Pray that we may be owned and blessed to the gathering in, and gathering home of GOD's elect, to the awakening, convincing and converting of sinners, that they may be brought to see their sin and danger, the necessity and excellence of CHRIST and his salvation, and may be *turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God*; that multitudes may fly as a cloud to CHRIST and his churches, and *flock like doves to the holes of their windows*; that we may not have cause for that mournful complaint, *Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed* (*p*)*?* but that many may be made a *willing people in the day of his power* (*q*).

And pray that our ministry may be blessed to the growth, establishment and perseverance of the saints, in light, faith and love, in evangelical repentance, consolation, hope, and holiness to compleat salvation; that they who sit in darkness, and are full of doubts and fears, may be enlightned, resolved and satisfied, that the weak may be strengthened, that the tempted may be succoured, that wounded consciences may be healed, that the bowed down in spirit may be raised up, that the dejected and disconsolate may be encouraged and comforted, that the wavering may be established, that languishing souls may be revived, that cold hearts may be warmed, that backsliders may be recovered, that all the righteous may hold on their way, and grow stronger and stronger,

(*p*) Isai. liii. 1. (*q*) Psal. cx. 3.

stronger, that the churches of CHRIST may be abundantly increased and edified, and that we may always *come to you in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ* (r).

6. *Brethren, pray for us*, that the usefulness of our lives may be continued.

Beg of GOD that, for your sakes rather than our own, we may not be cut off in the midst of our vigor and services, as many of his servants have been, an affecting instance of which has lately been felt in this place; and that we may not outlive our usefulness to the church and the world, as has been the case of others. Pray that our abilities of body and mind, our strength and health, our gifts and graces, may be maintained in a capacity of continued and growing service all our days. Pray that Satan may not stir up enemies against us, and hinder us in our work; and that our minds may not be distracted, enfeebled, and broken by the slights and unkindnesses of our friends, by the jars and discords of some professors of CHRIST's name, and by the defection of others, or by straits and hardships in our worldly circumstances. And pray that we may have continued liberty, by the favor of a good government, for the exercise of our ministry, that *the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified*, that we may be *delivered from them who do not believe*, and from *unreasonable and wicked men*, who envy our rights and privileges, and would stop our mouths: For these purposes the Apostle begged the prayers of the churches, *Rom.* xv. 20. and 2 *Thess.* iii. 1, 2. And when *Peter* was put into prison, *prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him* (s).

7. *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may be united with one another, and with the churches of CHRIST, in carrying on the work of the LORD.

Beg

(r) Rom. xv. 29. (s) Acts xii. 5.

Beg of GOD that our hearts may be knit together in love with our brethren in the miniſtry, and with our brethren in the fellowſhip of the Goſpel, eſpecially with thoſe of them, who are under our paſtoral care; that we all may ſtrive, not one againſt another, but *may ſtrive together, as with one mind* and heart, *for the faith of the Goſpel* (*t*), and may *contend earneſtly*, and unitedly, *for the faith once delivered to the ſaints* (*u*). Be earneſt with GOD for us, that we may aſſiſt, encourage and ſtrengthen one another's hands in the work of the LORD; and may never weaken them by unreaſonable jealouſies, and unbrotherly treatment, by pride and envy, by diſreſpect and contempt, by ſhyneſs and diſtance, by feuds and quarrels, by diviſions and a party-ſpirit, to the prejudice and diſgrace of the common cauſe of CHRIST and religion.

Pray that all the faithful ſervants and ſaints in CHRIST JESUS may live, and love as brethren, and that none of them may injure the characters and uſefulneſs of others, who we cannot but believe are dear to CHRIST, have the grace of GOD in truth, and agree with us in the foundation-articles of the Goſpel, though in ſome leſſer things they may differ from us, and may not follow with us. Pray that, *as far as we have already attained, we may all walk by the ſame rule, and mind the ſame things* (*x*); and that if, in matters of a more doubtful and indifferent nature, any be otherwiſe minded, we may recommend them to the grace of GOD, in the uſe of chriſtian brotherly methods, to ſet them to-rights in thoſe things, and may nevertheleſs think and ſpeak well of their other ſervices, as far as they are ſuited to promote the moſt important doctrines and duties, relating to the glory of CHRIST, the intereſts of real religion, and the ſalvation of the church. Pray that we may be of the Apoſtle's ſpirit, who *rejoiced*,

(*t*) Phil. i. 27. (*u*) Jude 3. (*x*) Phil. iii. 15, 16.

rejoiced, and resolved he *would rejoice*, *if Christ were preached* (*y*), whether it were by friends or enemies to himself. And pray that *Elders may be intreated as fathers*, *and younger men as brethren* (*z*), that all faithful ministers may treat one another, and be treated by others, with due decency and respect, and that all who love our LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity and truth, and particularly the churches under our charge, may be *of one mind and live in peace*, and so the *God of love and peace may be with us* (*a*). Once more,

8. *Brethren*, *pray for us*, that our own souls may be saved, and that we may give up our accounts with joy in the day of the LORD JESUS.

Let us have an interest in your prayers, that we may *fight the good fight of faith*, *and lay hold on eternal life* (*b*), that *when* we have done *preaching to others*, *we ourselves may not be cast-aways* (*c*); but that we may be helped to take such *heed to ourselves*, *and to our doctrine*, as shall be the means, in the hand of the Spirit, *of saving ourselves and them that hear us* (*d*); and that *when the chief shepherd shall appear*, *we may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away* (*e*). O! that all things relating to us may *turn to our salvation*, *through your prayers*, *and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* (*f*). And pray that our accounts of our people, and of our ministry to them, for whose souls we watch, may be given up at last *with joy*, *and not with grief*; *for that would be unprofitable*, and very sad *for them* (*g*). Pray that they may be *our hope*, *and joy*, *and crown of rejoicing* now, and that they *may be our glory*, *and our joy*, *in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming* (*h*). Pray that multi-

(*y*) Phil. i. 18.
(*z*) 1 Tim. v. 1.
(*a*) 2 Cor. xiii. 11.
(*b*) 2 Tim. vi. 12.
(*c*) 1 Cor. ix. 27.
(*d*) 1 Tim. iv. 16.
(*e*) 1 Pet. v. 4.
(*f*) Phil. i. 18.
(*g*) Heb. xiii. 17.
(*h*) 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

multitudes may be owned by CHRIST, as the seals of our ministry, in the day of his second appearing, and that then we may be found among *the wise, who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and among those, that have turned many to righteousness, and shall shine as the stars for ever and ever* (*i*).

Having in these brief hints directed your prayers for us, which reminds us of our duty; let me,

II. Offer some considerations to engage your prayers on our behalf; which will shew our need of them, and why we desire them.

And give me leave to suggest the following things to this purpose.

1. Our work is very important.

It is the greatest and the most important, that any persons can be engaged in. What you have heard, under the first general head, may be sufficient to convince you of this: It immediately relates to GOD and CHRIST, and another world, to the highest manifestations of the glory of GOD in CHRIST, and the recovery and salvation of immortal souls. The holiness and the happiness of this world, and the everlasting blessedness or misery of our hearers for the next, are nearly concerned in it: Eternal life or death hang, as it were, upon our lips; for we are *to some the savor of death unto death, and to others of life unto life*; and O! *who is sufficient for these things* (*k*)? How solemn, how awful and important are the consequences of our ministry! How much do the honor of CHRIST, and of GOD in him, the interest of religion, the prosperity of the church, and the welfare of precious souls, depend upon a due discharge of it! And yet the utmost of our study, labor, care and faithfulness will come to nothing; we shall bring nothing to pass by all that we can do, if GOD do not own, assist and succeed us in it. The work is his, and we are only underworkers to him in the great affairs of the kingdom of grace and glory. There-

(*i*) Dan. xii. 3. (*k*) 2 Cor. ii. 16.

Therefore, *Brethren, pray for us*, that this important work may not miscarry in our hands.

2. Our difficulties in managing it are many.

There cannot but be many difficulties arising from the nature of the work itself, as it relates to the deep things of GOD, the concerns of his glory, and the salvation of never-dying souls. It is no easy thing to understand, state, and defend the great doctrines of the Gospel; to set them in a just, proper, and harmonious light, and to enforce its duties upon right principles; to improve and apply every point in a suitable manner to all cases; to make a due separation between the precious and the vile; rightly to divide the word of truth to saints and sinners, to hardned and tender consciences, to weak and strong believers, to backsliders and to them that walk with GOD; and to maintain the purity of the churches, and the discipline of CHRIST's house, to his honor and your edification.

There are likewise difficulties arising from the many persons of different tempers that we have to do with: Some are enemies to us, to CHRIST and the Gospel; and even friends themselves are often occasions of the greatest grief and trouble to us. Some in this imperfect world, pardon me, brethren, I do not design an accusation of any particular person; but some, every one knows, are ignorant and obstinate, and others artful and intriguing; some inconsiderate, and others designing; some proud and passionate, and others morose and severe; some too lukewarm and indifferent, and others too hot and uncharitable: And whatsoever differences and disorders there are among them, they all one way or other affect us, and turn to our exercise and grief, though they may not immediately fall upon us. There are difficulties attending the temptations that surround us, from the smiles and frowns, the flatteries and resentments, the honors and reproaches, the accommodations and the straitnesses of this world, and even from

from the ſucceſs, or want of ſucceſs in our miniſtry. Some or other of theſe are ſtrong temptations to pride, covetouſneſs and ſenſuality on one hand, or to envy and hypocriſy, diſcouragement, ſloth and diſcontent on the other.

There are alſo difficulties ariſing from the oppoſitions we meet with from within, and from without, from our own ſpirits and from others ſpirits, from ſin, Satan and the world, and from the dangers we lie expoſed to, more than others, in days of trial, reproach and perſecution for the ſake of CHRIST and the Goſpel. It is a great thing to be faithful in the midſt of all theſe difficulties. We need abundance of wiſdom and grace, of ſtudy, pains and care, of faith and patience, of ſelf-denial and holy fortitude, of watchfulneſs over our own paſſions, of meekneſs and patience, of tenderneſs and forbearance, of humility and condeſcenſion; and we need a reſolute adherence to CHRIST, to the doctrines of the Goſpel, and the duties of our places, that our minds may not be ſhaken and enfeebled, nor our zeal abated by the difficulties which beſet us; but that notwithſtanding theſe, we may hold on our way, and faithfully fulfil the miniſtry we have received of the LORD JESUS. Therefore, *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may not be perverted and overſet by the difficulties we meet with in our work.

3. Our ſtrength is but ſmall.

We are men of like paſſions, of like natural and ſinful infirmities with yourſelves; weakneſs and wearineſs attend our mortal bodies; fleſh and blood, and appetites and affections toward this world, hang about us, and ſenſible objects ſtrike us, and are apt to entangle and enſnare us. Many corruptions remain with us; I ſpeak from what I know of myſelf: we are dark and ignorant creatures, liable to miſtakes; we are weak and impotent creatures, inſufficient for any thing as of ourſelves; and we are in danger of being under a wrong biaſs in our views and con-

duct: Pride and paſſion are incident to us, fear and diſcouragement are apt to break our ſpirits, and ſloth and indolence are ready to creep upon us; and there is ſomething lacking in our ſpirituality, and heavenly-mindedneſs, and in every gift and grace that is neceſſary to a due diſcharge of our truſt. We are no match for the difficulties we meet with, nor are we equal to the importance of our work; we are no more than GOD makes us, and all the treaſure we have is *in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us* (*l*). Therefore, *Brethren, pray for us*, that we may be helped againſt all our infirmities, and may never be left to our own ſpirits.

4. The reſidue of the ſpirit is with the LORD, and there is room to hope that, by the help of your fervent prayers, it may be brought down upon us.

We ſerve a good maſter, who has promiſed to be with us, and is all-ſufficient for our help; this is our grand encouragement in our work, and without an experience and hope of this we ſhould utterly ſink and faint in it: But though *we are not ſufficient of ourſelves to think any thing as of ourſelves*; yet *our ſufficiency is of God, who makes us able miniſters of the new teſtament, not of the letter* of the Goſpel only, *but of the ſpirit* (*m*) of the Goſpel, which accompanies the miniſtration of it. CHRIST'*s grace is ſufficient for us, and his ſtrength is made perfect in our weakneſs*; and *we can do all things through Chriſt who ſtrengthneth us*. It is he that ſtands by his ſervants, that none may hurt them whilſt he has work to do by them; and it is he that *gives them a mouth and wiſdom, which all their adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; for GOD has *not given to them the ſpirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a ſound mind* (*n*). He aſſiſts and owns us in our work, and having obtained help of him, we continue to this day, witneſſing both

(*l*) 2 Cor. iv. 7. (*m*) Ibid. iii. 5, 6.
(*n*) 2 Tim. i. 7.

both to small and great the things which concern CHRIST and his kingdom.

But we still need a further supply of his Spirit to qualify us for, and animate us in our work, that we, like the Apostle, may not *count our lives dear to ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God* (*o*). Alas! how visible is it, that the holy Spirit is in great measure withdrawn from ministers, as well as churches? Grey hairs are here and there upon us, and yet how many are there that know it not? But the residue of the Spirit is with CHRIST, he is exalted to shed him down abundantly in all his gifts and graces; and his promises encourage our faith and hope in prayer for this great blessing of the new testament: And if you, brethren, were to strive together with us in your prayers, what a happy omen would this be? What might we not expect from him, who hath said, *if but two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done unto them of my Father which is in heaven; for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (*p*)? GOD's pouring out a spirit of grace and supplication is his way of ushering in all other blessings. The prayer of faith honors GOD, and he will honor such prayer; he will hear the prayer of his people for their ministers, as well as of his ministers for them. When prayer was made by the church without ceasing for *Peter*, an angel of the LORD was sent to deliver him out of prison (*q*): And the Apostle *Paul* was well assured that the preaching of CHRIST, and his delight in it, would *turn to his salvation through the prayers of the church, and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ* (*r*).

Help us therefore, brethren, in your prayers, that we may be *strengthned with all might by the*

(*o*) Acts xx. 24.
(*p*) Matt. xviii. 19, 20.
(*q*) Acts xii. 5—10.
(*r*) Phil. i. 19.

spirit in the inner man, and that we may have *grace given to us, according to the measure of the gift of Christ*, who is *ascended up on high to give gifts to men*, and to continue giving *pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ* (*s*).

5. Our prayers and labors for you, call for a return of your prayers for us.

The Apostle prayed for the churches, as much as he desired their prayers for him; and his affectionate remembrance of them, together with his labors for them, and with them, encouraged his hopes, and justified his claims of their like remembrance of him. We have devoted ourselves to the service of CHRIST for your souls; we study, preach and pray with deep concern of heart for you; we are willing to spend and be spent, to wear out our time and strength, our spirits and health, our lungs and lives for you, to take all pains, and to *endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation, which is in Jesus Christ with eternal glory* (*t*).

We *watch for your souls*, and are earnestly desirous that they may prosper, and be saved in the day of the LORD JESUS, and would neglect nothing that, by the grace of GOD, may be the means of subserving your spiritual and eternal benefit. We *labor, striving, according to his working which worketh in us, that we may present you perfect in Christ Jesus* (*u*); and are always *laboring fervently for you in our prayers, that ye may stand perfect and compleat in all the will of God* (*x*). If you knew how much you are in our hearts, in our prayers and labors for you, you would never forget us at the throne of grace. Therefore, *Brethren, pray for us*, who are daily laboring and praying for you.

6. The

(*s*) Eph. iv. 7—13.
(*t*) 2 Tim. ii. 10.
(*u*) Col. i. 28, 29.
(*x*) chap. iv. 12.

6. The anſwer of your prayers for us will turn to your own benefit, and to the advancement of CHRIST's kingdom and glory.

It is your intereſt, as well as duty, to pray for us; for all your prayers on our behalf will return into your own boſoms. You, of all perſons, will be moſt likely to profit by our labors, for you will attend them with fairer proſpects of CHRIST's preſence with them, having beforehand recommended them to his bleſſing; and if our gifts and graces floriſh, we ſhall lead you into good paſture; but if they wither and decline, you will want food for your ſouls. The more we are filled with the treaſure of Goſpel truths, and live under their power, the more we ſhall hand them out to you: The more we abound in all ſpiritual wiſdom and utterance, the greater will be your advantage by the bleſſing of CHRIST on our miniſtrations, and the more will you ordinarily be increaſed, edified and comforted: The more the preſence of CHRIST is with us, the more you will feel it, and be the better for it. It all turns to your own account, as well as ours; and none knows how much both you and we loſe, for want of your prayers for us.

Yea, the more we are aſſiſted and owned, the more CHRIST makes us burning and ſhining lights, and attends our miniſtrations with the power of his Spirit, the more will his kingdom be enlarged, his intereſt prevail, and his glory ſhine in our world: When the *hand of the Lord is with us, great numbers will believe, and be turned to the Lord*; and GOD will thereby *fulfil all the good pleaſure of his goodneſs, and the work of faith with power* in your own ſouls, *that the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (*y*). Therefore, *Brethren, pray for us*, that you yourſelves may be edified, eſtabliſhed

(*y*) 2 Tim. i. 11, 12.

and comforted; and that the kingdom and glory of CHRIST may spread and prevail among us.

Thus we have gone through the two principal branches of our design, as far as our time would allow. Suffer me now to close the whole in a few words by way of address to this church, and its pastor.

1. To you of this church.

Let me intreat your prayers, as for myself and all the servants of CHRIST, so particularly for our brother, who is now set over you in the LORD. Beg for him all that we have been desiring you to ask of GOD for us; and let the various considerations, that have been offered to engage your prayers for us, be reviewed to engage them in a particular manner, with the greatest earnestness and importunity, frequency, and continuance for him.

The immediate and peculiar relation, in which he now stands in the bonds of the Gospel to you, the peculiar charge he has taken of you, the peculiar concern we trust he will have, and will manifest for you, the peculiar interest you will have in his prayers, studies and labors, and the peculiar concern your own edification and encrease will have in them, should in a special manner engage your most hearty and affectionate prayers of faith for him. And O watch for the answer of your prayers; and labor, by the grace of GOD, to do all that in you lies to subserve them, to strengthen his hands, to encourage him in his work, to study his comfort and usefulness by all means whatsoever, and to unite hand and heart in doing your utmost to promote them. And,

2. Let me intreat you, dear brother, in return, to regard this church as your peculiar charge.

If you would allow what I say to be transferred in a figure to myself, I would earnestly beseech, and even solemnly charge you, in the name of our LORD JESUS

JESUS CHRIST, to bear this church in a ſpecial manner upon your heart, and to labor for their ſpiritual edification in light, faith and love, in comfort, hope and holineſs to ſalvation.

Pray for them, and pray for yourſelf, that you may be made a great bleſſing to them; and labor, anſwerable to your prayers, and with a dependence on the grace you pray for, to abound in the exerciſe of all miniſterial gifts and graces among them, to guard againſt every defection from the doctrines and duties of the Goſpel, to fulfil your miniſtry with all faithfulneſs in the beſt manner, as may be moſt acceptable to GOD in CHRIST, and approved in the conſciences of his people, and as may be moſt likely, by his bleſſing upon it, to be the means of gathering in GOD's elect, and of building up his ſaints in their moſt holy faith. And beg and labor for the continuance of your uſefulneſs among them, and for ſuch an union with them and with other churches, and with your brethren in the miniſtry, as may beſt ſubſerve not only the peculiar edification of this church, but likewiſe the common intereſt of our LORD JESUS in the world. And that you may do thus, we, your brethren in the kingdom and patience of CHRIST, attended with the meſſengers of our churches, are come hither to offer up our prayers for you. GOD grant them a gracious anſwer!

SERMON XII.

The Character of Gospel Ministers.

Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr *William Johnson*, *October* 6, 1736, at *Ryegate* in *Surrey*.

1 COR. IV. 1.

Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

IN the foregoing chapter, the Apostle had been reproving the church at *Corinth*, for their misconduct toward the ministers of the Gospel; while they almost idolized some, and unworthily depreciated others; and took the measures of their different ways of treating them from considerations, that were extrinsic to the nature and design of their office. Hereupon, in our text, he adjusts their character, and determines the regards that ought to be paid to them.

In these words we have,

I. The character of Gospel ministers, which suggests their office and work. They are *ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

The

The word * translated ministers is commonly used for servants, and in its strictest acceptation signifies such servants, as used to be employed in the labor of rowing vessels; and Gospel ministers are under-rowers to CHRIST, laboring and working under him, and in subordination to him. They are likewise *stewards of the mysteries of God:* A steward is a servant still, though of higher rank than a rower; and the highest, as well as lowest offices of servants are committed to Gospel ministers, considered merely as such; not the highest to some, and the lowest to others, but both alike to them all; for the same persons are † both *ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*, as a dispensation of the Gospel is committed to them. The Apostle says this of himself and *Apollos*, who I take to have been a young man, and an ordinary minister; and so these are common characters, which belong to all CHRIST's faithful servants young and old, as well as to the Apostles themselves. They are *all brethren, and one is their master, even Christ* (*a*). They are all *ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* Hence we have,

II. The regard that is to be shewn them, which suggests the duty of others toward them. *Let a man so account of us.*

A man is here put indefinitely, for any or every man; let all persons of whatsoever party or pretences, *account*

* ὑπηρέτας.

† However applicable these characters may be to Apostles, as well as others, we are most immediately concerned to consider them, only with relation to ordinary ministers, inclusive of pastors and teachers. And as I principally have my eye upon pastors in this discourse; so I would be understood, as particularly meaning them, when I speak of the highest and lowest offices of servants being committed to them; because it is generally agreed that there are services peculiar to the pastoral office, which are not committed to those ministers, who are barely teachers; though there are none belonging to teachers, which are not committed to pastors.

(*a*) Matt. xxiii. 8.

account of us, or, as the * word signifies, consider us, and judge concerning us, as *the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* Let not their regard to us be influenced and determined by outward respects, or by personal considerations, so as to receive and admire some for their great gifts, and to reject and run down others of lower attainments; but let them look upon all, who are called to the ministry, and have obtained mercy to be found in the faith, and regular in their lives, let them look upon all these, as ministers of CHRIST, and Gospel stewards, and treat them accordingly.

Not but that it is lawful to esteem the talents and labors of some servants of CHRIST more than others, and to choose to sit under the ministrations of one, rather than of another, when providence favors with an opportunity for it, and it can be done with regularity and order. This we cannot but do, and this we are allowed to do, according as we find them most accommodated and owned to our spiritual edification and improvement in knowledge, grace, comfort and holiness: For as there are diversities of gifts, and the same Spirit, so some of these are, in the wisdom, condescension, and goodness of GOD, more suited and blessed to some, and others to others; and such as we find to be so to ourselves, we may and ought to prize and seek, as far as conveniently we can, to enjoy.

But then we are not to despise and reproach others, whose gifts are not so eminent in our opinion, which perhaps may be a wrong one; but if they hold the head, and are faithful according to the ability GOD has given them, we are to account of them as CHRIST's ministers and stewards, and to esteem them highly for their work's sake, and not to refuse, when we have proper opportunities, to hear them, or to encourage them in the ministry which they have received of the LORD JESUS.

According

* λογιζέσθω.

According to this general division and explication of the words, we shall, by divine assistance, a little further enlarge upon them in the order in which I have placed them. And we will begin with,

I. The character of Gospel ministers.

This consists of two parts, (1) They are *ministers of Christ*, and (2) They are *stewards of the mysteries of God.*

1. They are *ministers of Christ.*

They are his servants, who stand related to him, and are concerned with him and for him, in all their holy ministrations: And they take their denomination from him, on various accounts; some of which are these that follow.

(1. They derive their commission from CHRIST.

It is he, who puts them into the ministry, as the Apostle says of himself; *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry* (*b*). The office itself is of CHRIST's institution, and he vests his servants with all the authority, which they have for the execution of it. Hence we are told that *when he ascended up on high, he gave some, Apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ* (*c*): And some or other of these were to continue in the church, till the whole design of the ministry should be fulfilled, and CHRIST's mystical body should be compleated, or *till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* And our blessed Savior spoke of commissioning servants for his work through all generations, as a peculiar act of his Lordship, saying, *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

(*b*) 1 Tim. i. 12. (*c*) Eph. iv. 8—13.

Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (*d*).

As to extraordinary officers, such as Apostles and evangelists, CHRIST gave them their authority immediately, by a personal designation of them from himself, except *Matthias* among the Apostles, who was chosen in *Judas*'s stead by a solemn lot; and except *Timothy* and *Titus*, and perhaps some others, among the evangelists, who were added to the seventy. But as to ordinary officers, such as pastors and teachers, CHRIST gives them their authority immediately, by the choice and call of his church, with the concurring approbation of other churches, and of such as are already in the ministry, according to the general rules of his word.

The churches of CHRIST are, by his authority, to choose their own officers. Their right to this is founded in the very nature, and original laws of society, and is reserved to them by apostolic practice: For even in the extraordinary choice of *Matthias* to the Apostleship, *Acts* i. 16—26. the hundred and twenty disciples appointed two, as candidates, and applied to the LORD CHRIST in prayer for a notification of his will, as to which of them he had chosen: Then they gave forth their lots, and when he had disposed of the lot in favor of *Matthias*, they, to testify their approbation of CHRIST's choice, voted him into the number of the Apostles. *He was numbered with the eleven Apostles*, (ver. 26.) or (as it might be rendered) he was by common suffrage reckoned with the eleven Apostles; for it is such a sort of numbering, that the word * here used properly signifies: And it is observable, that this is a quite different word from that, by which *Judas*'s being numbered with them, (in which the disciples had

(*d*) Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

* συγκαλεῖ ψῆφον.

had no concern) was expressed, (ver. 17.) of whom *Peter* said, *He was numbered with us* *.

Again, when deacons were to be chosen, the twelve Apostles *called together the multitude of the disciples, and said, Brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business* (*e*). And when pastors were set over particular churches, or elders were ordained in them, the Apostles, though extraordinary officers, did not invade their rights; but, according to the just rendring of that passage, *Acts* xiv. 23. (as several learned men have, I think, rightly observed,) *when they had ordained*, or † placed *elders in every church*, in a way of common suffrage, by lifting up of hands, *and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*

It is likewise proper, that this should be done with the approbation of other churches, signified by their messengers, for the credit of religion, and for maintaining a brotherly communion among them; that they may shew their love to one another, and that the praise of their several pastors may, as far as possible, be in all the churches. These general rules may be gathered from 2 *Cor.* viii. 18, 23, 24. where the Apostle, having spoke of sending *Titus* to the church at *Corinth*, says, *We have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the Gospel, throughout all the churches.—Whether any do enquire of* Titus, *he is my partner, and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ. Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.*

And for the like purposes, it is most regular, when the circumstances of things admit of it, that other

* καληριθμημένος ἦν σὺν ἡμῖν.
(*e*) Acts vi. 2, 3.
† χειροτονήσαντες αὐτοῖς πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐκκλησίαν.

other pastors should testify their approbation of such, as are to be ordained, and should recommend them, and the churches which they take the charge of, to the blessing of CHRIST, by solemn prayer and fasting, attended with suitable instructions and exhortations; and so the sacred trust is to be committed to the pastor before many witnesses.

Indeed, whilst extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers continued in the church, imposition of hands was very fitly used, as in various other cases, so in separating persons to sacred office; and this was a sign to the faith of those that were concerned in it, with relation to such gifts. But, as no miraculous gifts are now to be expected, I do not see to what purpose the sign should be continued, or how it can be used with faith, after the thing signified is gone; or what right we have to lay on our hands, where nothing extraordinary is to be expected, either from the persons who lay them on, or in those on whom they are laid. If now, by an alteration of circumstances, the sign is become insignificant; or if it now really conveys nothing, but is only used as a solemn designation of the person who is put into office, and that just after he had been publicly notified, by proper questions and answers, to the whole congregation before; I can hardly think that the wisdom of CHRIST ordered the use of it to be continued in every state of the church; especially since he foreknew how much it would be abused, in days of the greatest corruption and ambition, for the support of clergy-power. Much less can I imagine that this ceremony should be thought requisite to the validity of ordination: If it were so, I wonder how it comes to pass that all our deacons are constituted without it; since primitive example is, at least, as clear and express for applying it to them, as it can be to any church-officers whatsoever.

But after all, I donot find in the writings of the new testament, that the LORD JESUS ever ordered this

this rite to be used in ordination, more than on some other occasions, for which none of us now pretend to use it; nor that he ever appointed it to be a standing ordinance for all ages of the church, on any account whatsoever; nor that hands were ever imposed by ordinary officers, upon ordinary officers.

Upon the whole then, though I am far from designing to condemn, or to reflect upon my brethren, who think proper to continue the use of this ceremony, and at the same time disclaim the pretence of authoritatively conveying office-powers or gifts by it; yet I hope I may be allowed to say, without offence, that a public recognizing of a church's call, and of a minister's acceptance of it; and a public testification of the concurring approbation of other pastors and churches, for preserving brotherly communion, and the purity of churches, and of the ministry; together with suitable instructions and exhortations, attended with solemn recommendations of the pastor and people to the blessing of GOD, by fasting and prayer; is all that I know of, as needful to a valid and regular ordination, in our days. And whoever is now duly qualified for, and orderly introduced to his holy office, in the mediate, as well as formerly in the immediate way; it may be said, that he derives his commission from CHRIST, or that he is *separated for the work, to which the Holy Ghost has called him* (*f*), as it is expressed in the case of *Paul* and *Barnabas*, when they were sent to the *Gentiles*. Thus then they are ministers of CHRIST, as they derive their commission from him. But to proceed:

(2. They are under CHRIST's direction and command, in their ministrations.

They ought not to go until he sends them, and they ought to go whenever, and where-ever his providence, and the voice of his churches, as far as they are capable of judging, call them. He, by particular

(*f*) Acts xiii. 2.

particular suggestions of his spirit, and intimations of his providence, sent the Apostles and evangelists to this and the other place, where he had work for them to do: And though it would be enthusiastic to expect such immediate suggestions now, yet, as CHRIST is head over all things to the church, he still continues to open a way in his providence for the exercise of his servants ministrations; and secretly inclines the hearts of his people to call them, and inclines their own hearts to comply with their calls, for employing their labors among them.

And when they enter upon the ministry, which the LORD JESUS has committed to them, they are to dispense all ordinances according to his institution; and to teach neither more nor less than they find he has commanded, either expressly, or by just consequence, in the sacred scripture. They are to *give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word* (*g*). They are to *labor in the word and doctrine*; and to *preach the word of God* (*h*); as their work is frequently expressed. This word is their commission, which contains the whole of their instructions and charge; and they are to confine themselves to this, as ever they would act up to the character of ministers of CHRIST, who seek to please not men, but GOD.

(3. They are employed in CHRIST's service.

As they have their commission, instructions, and commands from him; so they are to be employed for him, to act under his authority, to publish and enforce his law and his Gospel, to keep the ordinances of his house, and by all appointed means to subserve his work of grace and holiness, and the interests of his kingdom and glory in the world. They are to set their faces, as a flint, against sin, Satan, and the world, and all the enemies that oppose these great designs for CHRIST; and are to subject all other interests to these, and make it the great business of their

(*g*) Acts vi. 4. (*h*) 1 Tim. v. 17.

their lives to promote them. Hence the service they are engaged in, is called *the work of Christ* and *the work of the Lord* (*i*). And the Apostle did *not count his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God* (*k*).

(4. CHRIST himself is the great subject of their ministrations.

His person as God-man, and his offices as the great mediator, head, and surety of the church, as their prophet, priest, and king; his incarnation, humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and death; his resurrection and exaltation, his righteousness and grace, his example and government, his undertakings and performances, his doctrine and precepts; the blessings brought in by him, and the obligations we are under to him, and to GOD through him; the way of our obtaining these blessings, and of answering these obligations; in a word, every thing that he is in himself, and in his relation to the Father, and the holy Spirit; and every thing that he is designed and made of GOD to be unto his people, for their salvation, and to his enemies, for their righteous destruction: All this, as far as his word reveals it, and his servants understand it, is to be displayed with the utmost evidence and advantage, on proper occasions, in their holy ministrations. They are to *preach Christ Jesus the Lord*; and all the lines of their ministry are one way or other to center in him.

Hence their ministry takes its denomination from this grand view, and is frequently called *preaching Christ*. And the Apostle's heart was so taken up with this, that he professedly *determined, not to know any thing among the* Corinthians, *save Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (*l*). Yea he rejoiced, with thanksgivings to GOD, in this, that he *caused him*, and his

U fellow-

(*i*) 1 Cor. xvi. 10. and Phil. ii. 30. (*k*) Acts xx. 24.
(*l*) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

fellow-laborers, *to triumph in Christ*; *and made manifest the savor of his knowledge by them, in every place* (*m*). Or, as he expresses it in another epistle, he admired that such *grace should be given to him*, as that *he should preach among the* Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ* (*n*).

(5. They receive their furniture for CHRIST's work, and their assistance in it, from him.

He does not send them on a warfare at their own charges; but takes it upon himself to provide them with such supplies, as may be needful and proper for them. As to their temporal concerns, that they may be subsisted in his service, *he has ordained, that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel* (*o*). And he takes care, in his providence, to protect them from the rage and injuries of their enemies, so long as he has any work to do by them, as he said to the Apostle *Paul*, by a vision in the night at *Corinth*; *Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace*; *for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city* (*p*).

And as to their spiritual furniture of gifts and graces, he is exalted to fill the officers of his church with such supplies as are necessary for the work of the ministry. *Grace is given to them, according to the measure of the gift of Christ* (*q*); and he distributes his gifts with great variety for different administrations by his Spirit, *who divideth to every man severally as he will* (*r*). He likewise goes forth with them in their work: While they keep close to his commission, they are under his promise, that he *will be with them alway to the end of the world.* He forms and influences their principles, motives and views; spirits them for his service, and encourages them in it; enlightens their minds, enlarges their hearts and spiritualizes their affections, directs them in their way,

(*m*) 2 Cor. ii. 14.
(*n*) Eph. iii. 8.
(*o*) 1 Cor. ix. 14
(*p*) Acts xviii. 9, 10.
(*q*) Eph. iv. 7, 8, &c.
(*r*) 1 Cor. xii. 11.

way, and opens to them a door of utterance; he is graciously present with them in the study and in the pulpit, in their conversation and in all their sacred ministrations, that they may *shew themselves to be workmen, who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (*s*); and may in all things *approve themselves as the ministers of God* (*t*). And so he makes them *able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit* (*u*), who assists and owns them in their work. Hence,

(6. All the success and reward of their ministry proceeds from CHRIST.

They can speak only to the ear, but he speaks to the heart, and adds such energy to their words, as turns them into spirit and life. If any are convinced and converted, and if any are edified, comforted and saved under their ministry, it is because the hand of the LORD is with them, to make the Gospel his power to the salvation of those that believe. Whoever plants or whoever waters, be it with ever so much skill and labor, eloquence, argument and pathos, they are nothing in point of efficacy; it is *God who giveth the increase*, and they are only *ministers by whom any believe*; *as the Lord gives to every one of them* (*x*). The princely Savior is *exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sin*, to *make his people willing in the day of his power*, and to *command the blessing in Sion, even life for evermore* (*y*). He opens an effectual door, that his Gospel may run and be glorified, and he causes it to come, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, that it may turn sinners from all their idols to GOD, and may continue to work effectually in them that believe, as it did in the *Thessalonians*.

(*s*) 2 Tim. ii. 15. (*t*) 2 Cor. vi. 4.
(*u*) 2 Cor. iii 6. (*x*) 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7.
(*y*) 2 Thess. i. 5, 9. and ii. 13.

Hence, when the Apostle speaks of the success of his ministry, *to make the* Gentiles *obedient by word and deed*, he represents it under the view *of things, which Christ wrought by him* (z). And all the blessed effect, which the Gospel had upon the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by his own and *Peter's* ministry, is ascribed unto CHRIST, of whom the Apostle says, *he that wrought effectually in* Peter *to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the* Gentiles (a). Not only mighty in the miracles, that were wrought for the confirmation of the Gospel; but mighty in its impressions and effects upon the hearts and consciences of many that heard it, insomuch that their Gospel became *mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ* (b).

And then, as to the reward of their ministry, this is all from CHRIST. He confers an honor upon his servants in putting them into the ministry, and in making them instruments, in his hand, of plucking sinners as brands out of the burning, of forming his own image in them, and of carrying on his begun work to compleat salvation; of overturning the powers of darkness, and spreading the interest and the glory of his own kingdom in the world: And he gives them the noble pleasure and satisfaction of being thus signally useful, in advancing the most important designs, that were ever set on foot for the glory of GOD and the good of others.

His work is indeed its own reward; it puts us, who are engaged heartily in it, under an happy necessity of making religion the proper business of our lives, and of spending the chief of our time and thoughts in converses with the sacred oracles, with GOD

(z) Rom. xv. 18. (a) Gal. ii. 8.
(b) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

God himself, with our own souls, and with the great and glorious realities of the upper world. And when Christ is present with us in his work, and commands a blessing upon it, inexpressible are the delights and joys that attend it: Then all our sensations, reflections and prospects are exalted and entertaining; then, as the way of the Lord is strength to the upright, so, if we are of that happy number, it animates us in his service, and carries us above all the hardships and discouragements that arise from others and from ourselves: We then feel that we are living to the best purposes, and rejoice in hope that the dear seals of our ministry will be *our glory and joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming* (*c*). And *when the chief shepherd shall appear, we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away* (*d*). Thus we see on what accounts Gospel ministers may be called *the ministers of Christ*. We now proceed to the other part of their character, and that is,

2. They are *stewards of the mysteries of God.*

And here it may be proper to consider (1) what their stewardship relates to, and (2) their stewardship itself.

(1. What their stewardship relates to.

And this is *the mysteries of God.* By the mysteries of God many understand the word and sacraments; and it must be allowed that both these go into the things which are to be dispensed by the ministers of Christ; But it does not appear to me, that by the *mysteries of God* the Apostle designed in our text to point us to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: For, though among some early writers of the primitive church, these were called mysteries; yet I do not find that the scripture ever uses the word in this sense, and the Apostle had said of himself, in the beginning of this epistle, that *Christ sent*

(*c*) 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. (*d*) 1 Pet. v. 4.

him not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel (*e*), i. e. preaching the Gospel was the principal work, for which he was sent: Accordingly this is what he seems most directly to refer to in our text; for this best agrees with the account he had before given of his work, and with his own use of the word in other places, where by mysteries he most commonly means the doctrines of CHRIST. In this sense therefore we shall chiefly understand it, though not to the exclusion of the other.

Now the doctrines of the Gospel may be called the *mysteries of God* on various accounts. They bear this denomination, as they were secret in GOD's breast till he revealed them, first more obscurely under the old testament, and afterwards more clearly under the new: Hence the Gospel is called *the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest by the preaching of Jesus Christ, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith* (*f*).

And even after these things are revealed in new-testament light, it may be said that there are mysteries in them still, especially with relation to the manner of their existence, or of their operation, as these are incomprehensible to us and lie out of our view: Hence the Apostle speaks of the great mystery of godliness, which still subsists under the Gospel revelation, *viz.* that *God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the* Gentiles, *believed on in the world, received up into glory* (*g*). And as to the way of the Spirit's operation by the Gospel, to make an effectual regenerating change upon our hearts, our blessed LORD himself speaks of it, as a mysterious thing, though the fact itself is certain, saying, *the wind blows where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither*

(*e*) 1 Pet. i. 17.
(*f*) Rom. xvi. 25, 26.
(*g*) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

whither it goeth; *so is every one that is born of the Spirit* (*b*). These are mysteries for ministers and people to search into, as far as they may be capable of understanding them; and to adore, as far as they lie beyond the reach of their dark and narrow minds. But *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love him*, though something of them is *revealed by the Spirit*: And *we know not what we shall be*.

The great things of the Gospel may likewise be called mysteries still to unregenerate carnal minds, with regard to their glory and importance. After all the revelation which is made of them in the word, unrenewed souls do not see their amiable excellence and beauty; the wisdom, holiness, and grace, the strong and vital powers, that shine in them; nor are they spiritually inlightned, and suitably affected with them; till CHRIST *opens their understandings, to understand the scriptures* (*i*), and they come to view them in the impressive and transforming light of the holy Spirit. For, *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him*; *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (*k*). Talk to such an one of the glories of divine wisdom and grace, in the adorable method of salvation by JESUS CHRIST, and of their persuasive efficacy, and sweet relish in the believer's heart; and they do not know what you mean: You speak of some strange thing to them, which they have no just notions of, till *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ* (*l*); or till he, by his Spirit, lets them into those *secrets of the Lord, which are with them that fear him*; *and shews them his covenant*. These are the mysteries of GOD, which the stewardship of his servants relates to. This brings us to consider,

(*b*) John iii. 8.
(*i*) Luke xxiv. 45.
(*k*) 1 Cor. ii. 14.
(*l*) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(2. Their stewardship itself.

The ministers of CHRIST are his stewards, whose office it is to dispense, or distribute the mysteries of GOD to the church, which is his house and family. They are stewards in his house, and to his house. They are stewards in his house: They themselves are to be a part of his family, members of CHRIST, and members of the churches, of which they have the oversight, that they may have a due affection to them, and concern about them; may know their circumstances; may be at hand to make their spiritual distributions among them, as occasions require; and may have an office-right to do it. Hence the leading rule of churches, in their choice of officers, is *to look out among them men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom; who may be appointed over the business* (*m*), for which they are designed among them.

And these ministers are to be stewards to the house. Their proper office lies with the church, as *servants, whom their Lord has set over his house, to give them meat in due season* (*n*). This is the very business of their stewardship, which, among other things, intimates these that follow.

[1. That they are not lords of the affairs which are under their management.

A steward is but a servant to his LORD, and under him; and so are all the ministers of CHRIST. *Neither be ye called masters*, says the great head of the church, *for one is your master, even Christ* (*o*). They are not authors of the mysteries they dispense; but are to preach only that Gospel, which they have received from him; and to teach his disciples to observe whatsoever he has commanded them (*p*). It is the word of GOD, and not the word of man, CHRIST's scheme, and not their own, and his ordinances, and not human inventions, that they are to deal out to the

(*m*) Acts vi. 3. (*n*) Matt. xxiv 45.
(*o*) Matt. xxiii. 10. (*p*) Matt. xx. 28.

the people, according to his will. Nor are they lords in the family, to which they communicate; but servants of the churches, for CHRIST's sake, as the Apostle describes them, saying, *we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*; *and ourselves your servants, for Jesus sake* (*q*).

While they exercise CHRIST's authority, in the administration of the word, and ordinances of his house, and so *feed the flock of God, and take the oversight thereof*; they are to behave therein, not *as lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples of the flock* (*r*), in every grace and duty of the christian life; and particularly in all the dispositions, and acts of humility, which the Apostle insists upon in the following verses. Nor are they to pretend to an authority over the faith or consciences of others; but only to lead them to the faith of CHRIST, and to a subjection of their consciences to his authority, according to his word. *Not*, says the Apostle, *that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy* (*s*).

[2. Their stewardship intimates, that what they are concerned in, is committed to them as a trust, which they must give an account of to GOD.

A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to them, and a necessity is laid upon them; *yea, woe unto them, if they preach not the Gospel* (*t*); they must answer it to CHRIST another day. They are intrusted with the mysteries of GOD, as a treasure, to keep them safe and incorrupt; *we have this treasure in earthen vessels*, &c. *Hold fast the form of sound words*, says the Apostle, *which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus*; *that good thing*, meaning the doctrine of the Gospel, *which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost* (*u*). *And we*, says he, *are not as many which corrupt the word of God*; *but as of sincerity*,

(*q*) 2 Cor. iv. 5.
(*s*) 2 Cor. i. 24.
(*u*) 2 Tim. i. 13, 14.
(*r*) 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.
(*t*) 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17.

cerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ (*x*).

All their ministerial gifts and graces, opportunities and abilities, are likewise talents committed to them, to be improved, for the glory of their great LORD and Master, and for the good of his church. And when he comes to reckon with them, he will observe whether they have hid them in a napkin; or whether, and to what degree they have used them for the purposes for which he gave them; and he will deal with them accordingly, as is represented at large in the parable, *Matt.* xxv. 14—30. Hence was that solemn address of the Apostle *Paul* to *Timothy, I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom; preach the word, be instant, in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine* (*y*).

Once more, the souls of those, to whom CHRIST's stewards minister the things of GOD, are a charge committed to them, that they may take care of them, and do their utmost, as instruments in his hand, for their salvation. They are to *watch for their souls, as they that must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief* (*z*).

[3. Their stewardship intimates that faithfulness, care, and diligence, are to be used in discharging their trust.

It is required of stewards, says the Apostle in the next verse after our text, *that a man be found faithful*; that he be found so all the days of his life, and when he comes to give up his accounts at last. He must be faithful to CHRIST, to truth, and to his own and others souls; and not betray his trust, by giving up, or perverting the doctrines he should preach, or by neglecting his own salvation, or the souls committed to

(*x*) 2 Cor. ii. 17.
(*y*) 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.
(*z*) Heb. xiii. 17.

to his care. He should keep back nothing that is profitable; but, according to his ability, declare the whole counsel of GOD, as opportunities and occasions offer; and should use all appointed and lawful methods, whereby he may at least gain some; may win them to CHRIST, and then help them forward in their way to heaven, that they may be built up in their most holy faith, may be knit together in love, and may grow up in all things into him, who is the head.

And in order hereunto, he should be very careful to enquire into the mind and will of CHRIST, and into the state of his flock, that he may feed them with sound knowledge, and with instructions suitable to their condition, and circumstances; and so should *study to shew himself approved unto God, a workman, who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (*a*), that he may be a wise, as well as faithful steward. He should take care that every truth and duty may have its proper place in his ministrations, and that no person, who sits under them, may be able to say, there was nothing for me; but that faith and practice may be directed, and that consolations, or terrors, the blessings of the Gospel, or the threatnings of the law, may be distributed to saints or sinners, to tempted and doubting believers, or to careless and backsliding professors, to convinced and troubled consciences, or to bold and hardned sinners, as they belong to them respectively.

And this calls for great pains and diligence in the study, and in the pulpit; in prayer to GOD for the people, and in dealing with them in public ministrations, and in private conversation. Hence the Apostle exhorted *Timothy* to *stir up the gift which was in him*, and so to behave as that *no man might despise his youth: But*, says he, *be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith,*

(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 15.

faith, in purity: Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: Neglect not the gift that is in thee, meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all: Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine: continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (*b*). But it is time to add a few words upon the other branch of the text, with a view to which, I have so largely insisted on this; and that is,

II. The regard that is to be shewn to Gospel ministers. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

As these are the characters that ought to be exemplified in ministers; so the people ought to receive or reject them, according as they do, or do not answer these characters; and to think neither better nor worse, nor otherwise of them, than what they really are in their work and office, whatever may be their different gifts, and parts, and ways of preaching. As there are *diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, who giveth them to every one* of his servants *to profit withal* (*c*); and as some of these are suited to the taste and edification of some, and others of others; so none who have obtained mercy to be faithful, should be idolized on one hand, or despised on the other; neither one nor the other should be set either higher or lower, in your judgment and esteem of them, and behaviour towards them, than as *the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.* This conjunction of their characters guards against two extremes. One is exalting them too high, and puffing up their vanity; and the other is sinking them too low, and laying them under discouragement. Therefore,

1. You should consider them all, as servants, and stewards, that you may not raise them too high in your account of them.

They

(*b*) 1 Tim iv. 12—16. (*c*) 1 Cor. xii. 4, 7.

They are spoken of under these denominations, which carry ideas of subjection and dependence, that none may think of them, nor they of themselves, higher than they ought. They are to be regarded only *as helpers of your joy*; and as *ministers by whom ye believe, even as the Lord gives to every man*; as just so much, and no more than he makes them to be. His word, because it is his, and not theirs, is to be the rule of your faith, worship, and obedience. His authority, and not theirs, is to be your obligation to observe what they say; and the glory of all the good which is done by their ministry, is to be ascribed to him, and not to them, that *no man may glory in men*; *for all things*, says the Apostle to the church, *are yours: Whether* Paul, *or* Apollos, *or* Cephas; *all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's* (*d*). The ministry itself was instituted for your sakes, and all its services are for your souls: Hence, as you have heard, even the Apostles averred that they *preached not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and themselves* the church's *servants, for Jesus sake* (*e*). Accordingly they are to be looked upon, as doing their duty to their great master, and discharging their trust for you, while they are most laborious and eminent in his service, and are dealing out the richest treasures of Gospel mysteries to you; for they only *minister, as of the ability which God gives; that God, in all things, may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen* (*f*). But,

2. You should likewise consider them all, as the servants of *Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*, that you may not sink them too low in your account of them.

This sets forth the dignity of their service under the best of masters, and with respect to the best of things,

(*d*) 1 Cor. iii 20, 21, 22. (*e*) 2 Cor. iv. 5.
(*f*) 1 Pet. iv. 11.

things, that they may not be dejected in themselves, nor despised by others. Though they are but servants, they are the servants of CHRIST, whom he owns and honors with his commission, directs and employs in his service, to spread the glory of his name, and whom he furnishes for their work, and assists and succeeds in it; and he will call you to an account how you behave toward them, and what use you make of their labors among you. And though they are but stewards in trust, who must give an account of their stewardship to their LORD, yet they are stewards of the most glorious *mysteries of God*, which are of the highest concern to you; and if their account at last of their care, and pains, and faithfulness toward CHRIST and your souls in dispensing them, should prove matter of grief and not of joy, it is you that will be the sufferers, it will be *very unprofitable for you.*

They are therefore to be highly honored and seriously regarded, for the sake of their noble employment, and of their near relation to CHRIST in it; they are to be prized and esteemed, as they come with a commission to *preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things*, the best tidings of the best things, that were ever heard of in a lost world. And they are to be received for their great LORD and Master's sake, and to be submitted to in every thing, which they can prove by his word to be his will; for while they keep close to their commission, he puts this sanction upon their character, *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me* (*g*); *and he that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me* (*h*).

CHRIST makes their cause his own, because they make his cause theirs. He regards it as such; and so should you, as they stand related to him, and are employed

(*g*) Matt. x. 40. (*h*) Luke x. 16

employed in the most difficult and important service for his glory and your good. Under this consideration of them, you should encourage, countenance and assist them, by your constant and diligent attendance on their ministry, without prejudice, or an indifference of spirit, and with great candor and deep concern to profit under it; you should strengthen their hands and comfort their hearts, by walking orderly together in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel, and in all holiness and peace. You should likewise treat them as the ministers of CHRIST, in your fervent prayers to GOD for them, in your tender, respectful and affectionate carriage toward them; in vindicating their characters and ministrations from unjust reproaches, and siding with them against CHRIST's and their enemies; and in communicating to them of your temporal things, for their comfortable subsistence among you, while their time and strength, their care and pains, and all the fruits of their expensive education and christian experience, are spent in communicating spiritual things to you. In these ways they are to be accounted of and treated as *the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

Thus we have, as our time would allow, gone through both parts of our text; and the nature of this discourse is such, as makes its own application. We may all herein see our duty, and our defects, to excite a holy diligence, to lay us low under a sense of our utter insufficiency, and to shew us what indispensible need there is of grace from on high, to enable ministers to act up to all the importance of their character, and hearers to behave toward them in a due correspondence to it. Let me therefore, for a conclusion of the whole, recommend what has been said, in the former part of this discourse, to myself, and all my brethren in the ministry, and particularly to you, dear brother, who are now separated

parated to office in this church, that we and you may behave as *ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

Think, brother, of your trust and charge, and of the solemn account you must one day give to CHRIST. Consider yourself as a servant, and as a fellow-servant with the rest of his ministers, that you may cultivate all the duties of humility, and brotherly love, and of united service with them, as opportunities offer. Look well to the state of your own soul, and then to the state of the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseer. Keep close to CHRIST's commission, and labor to execute it in its full extent. Look upward for all direction and assistance, acceptance and success, in your labors; and take all your encouragements from him to animate you in them. Remember that you have a good Master, who has promised to be with you, and whose work is its own reward; and that, if he, who has put you into the ministry, enables you to be found faithful in it, he will ere long appear, and give you *the crown of life, which fadeth not away. Watch* therefore *in all things; endure afflictions, do the work* of a pastor and teacher, *and make full proof of your ministry*, till at the close of life, you, through grace, may be able to say with the Apostle, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing* (*i*).

And let me recommend what has been said, in the latter part of this discourse, to every hearer and church member, and particularly to you, the hearers and members of this church of CHRIST, who usually worship here and in the neighbouring town, that you may account of every Gospel preacher, and particularly of your reverend pastor, as a *minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God.* Let what you

(*i*) 2 Tim. iv. 5—8.

you have heard about these characters be improved to direct, and influence your regards to him. Think of him, esteem and honor him, suitable to his distinguished station; take heed of deserting his ministry, or of any way grieving him; and let nothing be wanting in your prayers or cares, concern or labor, to help him forward in his great and difficult work, and to make it agreeable and delightful to him, both with regard to temporal and spiritual concerns. Remember that every soul of you must give an account to GOD of your behaviour toward him, and of your improvement or misimprovement of his ministry, which, as far as it may be according to divine approbation, will be *unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* And let it be your chief concern, that such efficacious grace may accompany his ministrations as shall turn them into a savor, not of death unto death, but of life unto life to you, that ye may be his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST at his coming.

SERMON XIII.

The Excellency of a judicious Love, and of Sincerity, &c.

Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr *Thomas Gibbons*, *October* 27, 1743, at *Haberdasher's Hall*, *London*.

PHIL. I. 9, 10, 11.

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

AS prayer is a great part of the work and duty of this day; that excellent one, contained in these words, is the best directory, that I know of, for the present solemn occasion: It leads our thoughts to a cluster of the most desirable and important blessings, that are to be continually sought, and pursued with vigor, in the use of all proper means,

means, by every chriſtian, and every church of CHRIST; and is the great Apoſtle's prayer for the church at *Philippi*, together with its *biſhops and deacons*, as appears from *ver.* 1.

Biſhops or overſeers, as the word (ἐπισκοποις) ſignifies, is, in ſcripture uſe, of the ſame import with paſtors or elders, as is evident, among other places, from *Acts* xx. 17, 28; where we are told that the Apoſtle, having called together *the elders of the church at* Epheſus, ſaid to them, *Take heed unto yourſelves, and to all the flock*, (this, in alluſion to the office of a ſhepherd, carries the idea of a paſtoral care of the church) *over which* (ſays the Apoſtle) *the Holy Ghoſt hath made you overſeers*, (which is the very ſame word, that in *Philipp.* i. 1. and ſeveral other places, our tranſlators have rendered biſhops) *to feed the church of God*; where we have a further reference to paſtoral work, whether we take it with relation to their *feeding the people of God with knowledge and underſtanding*, as *paſtors according to his own heart* (*k*), which he promiſed to give them; or take it, as the word (ποιμαινειν) is likewiſe ſometimes uſed, and is tranſlated, *Matt.* ii. 6. Rev. ii. 27. and xix. 15. for *ruling* or *governing the church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own blood.*

Theſe elders or biſhops were the paſtors of particular churches, as that was at *Epheſus*, and as thoſe were, of which it is ſaid, that the Apoſtles *ordained elders in every church* (*l*); and we often find, that theſe terms, elders and biſhops, were promiſcuouſly uſed one for the other; and that their qualifications, work and office were the ſame; as particularly, when the Apoſtle was deſcribing the character of thoſe elders, that *Titus* was to ordain in every city, he tells him, *they were to be blameleſs*; and to enforce it, adds, *For a biſhop muſt be blameleſs*; which plainly ſhews, that by an elder and a biſhop he meant the very ſame thing, otherwiſe there could be no force

(*k*) Jer. iii. 15. (*l*) Acts xiv. 23.

in the argument, that an elder ſhould be blameleſs, becauſe a biſhop muſt be ſo, eſpecially if the laſt were a ſuperior order to the firſt. And the Apoſtle *Peter* exhorted the elders of the churches, to which he wrote, *to feed the flock of God, taking the overſight thereof* (*m*), (επισκοπουντες) which, according to the genius of our tranſlation, ſhould have been rendered biſhoping, or performing the office of a biſhop in it; only this would too apparently have led the *Engliſh* reader to apprehend, that all the biſhop's work was to be fulfilled by the elders.

However, in the church at *Philippi*, and in that at *Epheſus*, there were more than one, who are ſpoken of under the title of biſhops, in each of them. And great pains have been taken, upon the moſt uncertain conjectures, by the learned Dr *Hammond* *, and others, to find out a collection of the dioceſan biſhops of the proconſular *Aſia*, at *Epheſus*; and a metropolitan, with his dioceſans of *Macedonia*, at *Philippi*: But as I can find no metropolitans, or dioceſans in the new teſtament; ſo, were there any ſuch in *Aſia*, it is ſcarcely to be thought, that there was time enough for calling them together to meet the Apoſtle *Paul*, who on a ſudden ſent for the elders of *Epheſus* to come to him at *Miletus*, when he was only paſſing by in haſte on his journey to *Jeruſalem*, as appears from *Acts* xx. 16, 17. And his *ſending to* Epheſus, *and calling the elders of the church*, plainly intimates, that it is meant of the elders of that church only.

As to *Philippi*, the current of antiquity runs againſt its being the metropolis of *Macedonia*; but gives that dignity to *Theſſalonica* †. And it is very evident from

(*m*) 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

* See his note on *Philipp* i. 1.

† Dr *Whitby*, in his note on this place, has ſhewn, with abundant evidence, that *Theſſalonica* was the metropolis of *Macedonia*; and that when *Philippi* is called (as our tranſlation has it, *Acts* xvi. 12.) the chief city of that part of *Macedonia*, (πρωτη της μεριδος της Μακεδονιας πολις) the meaning is not, that it was the chief city of the province, but the firſt city of that part of *Macedonia*, which they

from the inscription of this epistle, that it was wrote to the *bishops and deacons*, as well as to the *saints in Christ Jesus* that ordinarily resided at *Philippi*. Accordingly Dr *Whitby* owns, that by the bishops at *Philippi* are meant the presbyters there; though he distinguisheth them from their proper bishop, which he supposes was *Epaphroditus*.

Upon the whole, it seems to me to be most easy and natural to suppose, either that, some urgent circumstances requiring it, there were joint pastors of equal degree, as well as order, in one and the same church; or that such stated assistants, as were equal with the pastor in order, though not in degree, and so had power, with the pastor's consent, or in his absence, to perform all the duties of his function, are here included under the term bishops: And I confess I rather incline to the last of these opinions; because I think it appears pretty plain from the earliest writers after the Apostles, such as *Clemens Romanus*, *Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, and *Justin Martyr*, and after them *Cyprian**, and others, that there were only two different

they, that came from *Thrace* thither, touched at. And we may add, that *Philippi*'s being called a colony (*Acts* xvi. 12.) is far from proving it to have been the metropolis of *Macedonia*, or of any one province of it, as Dr *Hammond* would have it: For it seems very fanciful to imagine, that every colony must needs be a metropolis; since in some provinces there were many colonies. Vid. Strab. Geogr. Lib. 5. p. 216, 217. Lut. Par. 1620.

* *Clemens Romanus* indeed speaks of more bishops than one in a church, which I take to be meant in the laxer sense; because he often uses the terms, bishops and presbyters or elders promiscuously, as of the same import; and mentions only two orders, *viz.* bishops and deacons, as constituted by the Apostles. Καὶα χωρας ουν κ) πολεις κηρυσσοντες, καθιστανον τας απαρχας αυτων, δοκιμασαντες τω πνευματι, εις επισκοπους κ) διακονους των μελλοντων πιστευειν. κ) τουτο ου καινως, εκ γαρ δη πολλων χρονων εγεγραπτο περι επισκοπων κ) διακονων. κ. λ. — Και οι αποστολοι ημων εγνωσαν δια του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου οτι εριδος εσται επι του ονοματος της επισκοπης. δια ταυτην ουν την αιτιαν προεγνωσιν ακριβως τελειαν, κατεστησαν τους προειρημενους, κ) μεταξυ επινομην δεδωκασιν, οπως εαν κοιμηθωσιν, διαδεξωνται ετεροι δεδοκιμασμενοι ανδρες την λειτουργιαν αυτων. — υποτασσεσθε τοις πρεσβυτεροις. *Clem. Rom.* Epist. 1. ad Corinth. § 42. 44. 57. apud *Coteler.*

ferent orders of church officers, *viz.* bishops or pastors, and deacons; and that there was, strictly speaking, only one bishop or pastor to a church or congregation, which met together in one place for the worship of GOD; and but one church to a bishop. From hence also it appears, that if either of those writers at any time mention presbyters with, and in distinction from, bishops, it is to be understood of such sort of assistants: And these might be the more needful for the churches at the first plantation of the Gospel in the Apostle's days; because either they, or the pastors were obliged, on one occasion or other, to attend the Apostles, or go on messages to or from them, as *Epaphroditus* did, who went to the Apostle *Paul* with the church's benevolence, and was some time

Patr. Apost. pag. 170, 171, 178. vol. 1. Accordingly *Polycarp* speaks of presbyters and deacons, as the two sorts of officers that were to be submitted to. Υποτασσομενες τοις πρεσβυτερις κ) διακονοις. Epist. ad Philip. pag. 18. 4to. Oxon. 1644.

The other ancient writers above mentioned assure us, that there was but one bishop to a church, that met together in one place for worship and communion, and one such church to a bishop. Οπυ δε ο ποιμην εστιν, εκει ως προβατα ακολουθειτε—οσοι γαρ Χριστ εισιν, ουτοι μετα τ επισκοπ εισιν — Μια γαρ σαρξ τ Κυριυ ημων Ιησυ Χριστ— κ) εν ποτηριον — εν θυσιαστηριον, κ) εις επισκοπ· αμα τω πρεσβυτεριω, κ) τοις διακονοις. *Ignat.* Epist. ad Philad. pag. 93, 96. ibid. Και τη τ ηλιυ λεγομενη ημερα παντων κατα πολεις η αγρους μενοντων επι το αυτο συνελευσις γινεται, προσευχ δια λογ την νενεσιαν — ποιειται — κ), ως προεφημεν, παυσαμενων ημων της ευχης, αρτ· προσφερεται κ) οινος κ) υδωρ· κ) ο προεστως ευχας ομοιως κ) ευχαριστιας οση δυναμις αυτω αναπεμπει. κ λ. Just. Martyr. Apol. 2. pag. 98. Paris 1630.

Cyprian in his account of this matter says, Aliud altare constitui, aut sacerdotium novum fieri, præter unum altare & unum sacerdotium, non potest. Epist. 43. p. 229. edit. 3. a Joh. Fell. 1700.—And speaking of *Cornelius*, as rightful bishop of *Rome*, he says, Cum post primum secundus esse non possit, quisquis post unum, qui solus esse debeat, factus est; non jam secundus ille, sed nullus est. Ibid. epist 55. p. 243.——Speaking of bishops, ordained by *Novatus*, he says, Cumque jampridem per omnes provincias, & per urbes singulas ordinati sint episcopi in ætate antique—ille super eos creare alios pseudo-episcopos audeat. Ibid. pag. 249.——And at another time, Neque enim aliunde hæreses obortæ sunt, aut nata sunt schismata, quam inde, quod sacerdos Dei non obtemperatur, nec unus in ecclesia ad tempus—cogitatur. Ibid. epist. 59. pag. 261.

time with him, chap. ii. 25. and iv. 18. and who, as some think with Dr *Whitby*, was the proper pastor of the church at *Philippi*; though how justly may admit of debate.

But, be this at it will, this church at *Philippi* was compleatly organized, as having its bishops and deacons; and they were a church exceeding dear to the Apostle *Paul*, who sent his *affectionate salutations* to them; *blessed God for them*; and had great *confidence, that he, who had begun the good work in them*, (as the Apostle, in the judgment of charity, believed concerning them all,) *would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* And he could appeal to GOD, that he *greatly longed after them all in the bowels of Jesus Christ*, or with the most vehement and tender affection to them, as persons, whom CHRIST loved; and with a fervor of soul, in his touching concern for their spiritual prosperity, which resembled CHRIST's own compassionate and ardent love to them. An account of these things you have *ver.* 2—8. And it was from this his abundant affection toward them, that he poured out his heart for them, in that admirable address to GOD in our text, saying, *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.*

This prayer may, perhaps, be fitly enough divided into two principal petitions: One is, *That their love might abound in knowledge and in all judgment*, (εις το δοκιμαζειν) *unto their approving things that are excellent*, as it may be rendered; and so their *love's abounding in knowledge and in all judgment* may be considered, as having a tendency and influence unto *their approving the things that are excellent:* And its *abounding yet more and more*, may be considered as

expreſſive of the degree, unto which the Apoſtle deſired it might abound, even unto the *approving things that are excellent*. The other petition is, that they *might be ſincere, and without offence till the day of Chriſt; being filled with fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God*; and ſo their being *ſincere, and without offence*, may be conſidered, as manifeſted and exemplified in their being *filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs*, &c.

Or elſe, we may take the whole prayer, as conſiſting of four diſtinct petitions; one of which naturally leads on, in an orderly gradation, to the other, and which all together make up the Apoſtle's requeſts for ſuch deſirable bleſſings, as enrich, and put a beautiful ornament upon the perſons and churches, that are favored with them. Or we may conſider the three laſt, as expreſſive of the noble ends, for which he prayed for the firſt; ſo that if their love did but abound in knowledge and in all judgment, that would bring on all the reſt.

But, in which-ever of theſe lights we take the connection of their parts, they exhibit ſuch excellent and important bleſſings, as demand the aim and purſuit, deſire and prayer of every chriſtian, and of every Goſpel church, for themſelves and others: And it is with this view, that I now propoſe, by divine aſſiſtance, to recommend them to our ſerious regards, and particularly to this church of CHRIST, and to every member of it. Let it therefore be your earneſt concern and prayer,

I. *That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.*

With reſpect to this, we may briefly obſerve the four following things.

1. The love, which you ſhould be aſpiring after, is chriſtian love.

It is ſuch as proceeds from *faith, which works by love* (*n*), and hath for its objects GOD and CHRIST, his

(*n*) Gal. v. 6.

his cauſe and intereſt, his truths, ordinances and ways, his people and ſervants, together with all your fellow-creatures, for his ſake. Love to all theſe ſhould be cordial and fervent, and ſhould diſcover itſelf in every proper operation, fruit and effect: As particularly, in your eſteem and choice of CHRIST for your head and Savior, prophet, prieſt and king, and of GOD in him for your covenant GOD and Father; in your deſires after him, delight in him, devotedneſs to him, and zeal for his glory; in a firm adherence to the great doctrines of the chriſtian revelation; in a correſpondent walk before GOD in all holy converſation and godlineſs, and according to the order of the Goſpel; and in a kind benevolent temper and behaviour towards *all men, and eſpecially toward them, who are of the houſhold of faith* (*o*). This is that love, which every way becomes the chriſtian character, and *is the fulfilling of the law* (*p*): This inſpires the ſoul with a chearful diſpoſition for, and activity in *keeping God's commandments* (*q*), without counting them grievous: And this ſhould be particularly expreſſed among yourſelves, in the moſt affectionate manner, towards each other, and toward your reverend paſtor, who is now ſet over you in the LORD.

In your temper and conduct towards each other, ſee that ye *be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another* (*r*): Let the *ſtrong bear the infirmities of the weak* among you; *and every one of you ſeek to pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification* (*s*): And remember, that ye are called to walk together with *all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; and to *ſpeak the truth in love, that ye may grow up*

(*o*) Gal. vi. 10.
(*p*) Rom. xiii. 10.
(*q*) 1 John v. 3.
(*r*) Rom. xii. 10.
(*s*) Rom. xv. 1, 2.

up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ (*t*).

And as to your regards to your worthy paſtor, let *none of you deſpiſe his youth*; but every one *eſteem him very highly in love, for his work's ſake*; *and be at peace among yourſelves* (*u*). See to it that your hearts unite in him; that you ſtudy his comfort, and do all that in you lieth to ſtrengthen his hands, and to encourage him in his work; and that ye ſhew forth your love to him, by an harmonious ſpirit among yourſelves; by earneſtly praying for him; by ſtatedly and diligently attending his miniſtry; by receiving the inſtructions and admonitions, which he, from time to time, may deliver to you in the name of CHRIST, and according to his will; by ſubmitting to him in the LORD; and by ſupporting his reputation and uſefulneſs, and honorably providing ſuch a maintenance for him, as may free him from the cares and incumbrances of this world; may raiſe his circumſtances above contempt; and ſet him at liberty for attending wholly to his ſacred charge, and employing all his gifts and graces, his thoughts, time, ſtrength and labors, in the ſervice of CHRIST, and of your ſouls. But,

2. Your being church-members ſuppoſes, that you are already partakers of this grace of love, in ſome prevailing degree.

The Apoſtle ſpeaks of the church at *Philippi* as *ſaints in Chriſt Jeſus*, concerning whom he had confidence, that GOD *had begun his good work in them* (*x*). And his prayer, that they might *abound* in love *yet more and more*, plainly intimates, that he looked upon them, as already partakers of that chriſtian grace, and as arrived at ſome conſiderable advances in it: And this indeed they had manifeſted in the teſtimony they had given of their great love to himſelf, for

(*t*) Eph. iv. 2, 3, 15. (*u*) 1 Theſſ. v. 13.
(*x*) ver. 2, 6.

for CHRIST's and the Gospel's sake; inasmuch as they had shewn a most affectionate care and concern for him, and had contributed, with great cheerfulness and liberality, for a comfortable supply of his wants; which he takes notice of with abundance of gratitude and pleasure, chap. iv. 10—18.

And your character, beloved in the LORD, as christians and church-members, supposes, that you are not strangers to this excellent grace, but that your hearts are already seasoned with it; your holy profession practically declares this, as well as strongly obliges you to it; and, in the judgment of charity, it is to be presumed, that you are, in reality and truth, what you profess to be: *It is meet for me*, as the Apostle said of the *Philippians*, *to think this of you all* (*y*). Persons that have nothing of this, ought not to be church-members: For love is the great band of union and communion, in that spiritual relation. But you, as a church, have given evident proof, not only that you are possessed of this grace, but that it hath a considerable degree of prevalence among you: The praises of your love to your former ministers are in all the churches of the saints round about you; your stedfastness in the faith of CHRIST, and adherence to the grand truths of his Gospel, which by a succession of faithful pastors you have been instructed in; your walking, in a good degree, as becometh the Gospel of CHRIST; your keeping together in your destitute state; and your now uniting in your affectionate choice and call of our dear brother, who I trust is come to you, as *a workman*, *that needeth not to be ashamed*, *rightly dividing the word of truth*, are signal and exemplary tokens and fruits of your christian love. However,

3. *Abounding* in it *yet more and more*, intimates, that it is not already perfect; but that you ought to seek after a further progress in it.

It

(*y*) ver. 7.

It becomes you, after all your attainments, to keep up a humbling ſenſe of your defects in this, as well as in every other grace; and to be earneſt with GOD to invigorate and carry it on to ſtill greater purity, livelineſs and eminence, that it may grow exceedingly in all its parts. As there was *ſomething lacking in the* Theſſalonians *faith* (z), which needed to be perfected; ſo, I doubt not but you are conſcious to yourſelves, that there is ſtill ſomething lacking in your love, either with reſpect to its entire diſintereſtedneſs, impartiality and ſpirituality; or with reſpect to ſome inſtances and exerciſes of it; or with reſpect to its conſtancy, and the degrees of its fervor and activity: There is ſtill room for further improvements of it, and for rectifying what may be amiſs in it; and therefore you ſhould be ſtill more and more cultivating it, and preſſing after a further increaſe and wider extent of it, with a like temper of mind that governed the Apoſtle, when he ſaid, *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that, for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus. Brethren I count not myſelf to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus* (a). And,

4. Its *abounding yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment*, ſuggeſts, that it ought to be a judicious love.

The word (αισθησει) tranſlated judgment, properly ſignifieth ſenſe; and ſo may denote ſuch a judgment, as is formed by a ſpiritual ſenſation, taſte and ſavor in the heart, as well as by right notions of evangelical truth and duty in the head. The love, that you ſhould aim at, is not a blind, impetuous ſally of pleaſing and fervent paſſions; but ſuch a love, as reſults from a ſettled, well digeſted, ſcriptural knowledge

(z) 1 Theſſ. iii. 10. (a) Phil. iii. 12, 13.

ledge of the important doctrines of christianity; and from all manner of experimental acquaintance with the love of GOD in CHRIST to your own souls, and with the divine objects, that engage your affections.

Light should kindle all your warmth, that your love may be influenced by proper motives; that you may see the grounds and reasons of it, and may live under an impressive sense of your multiplied obligations to it; and that you may conduct it with such prudence, as shall recommend every exercise and appearance of it.

If there be not knowledge and judgment to engage, direct and support your love, it will be but like a land-flood, that overfloweth with a rapid stream, but hath no springs to maintain it, or banks to conduct it in a regular course; and you will not be able to give a good reason of the love, any more than of the hope, that is in you: Nor will you be secure from danger, either of being partial in it, or of unseasonably and indiscreetly exerting it, to the defeating of its own ends, and to the discredit of religion. The wise man tells us, that *it is not good for the soul to be without knowledge* (*b*); and, *my son*, says he, *keep sound wisdom and discretion*; *so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck*; *then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble* (*c*), &c. Even *a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*, may have terrible consequences to one's self and others; as it had in those *Jews*, who *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God* (*d*); and who vented their blind passions, with the utmost rage and fury, against CHRIST and his Gospel: But love and zeal, under the conduct of knowledge, wisdom and experience, brighten the glory of the christian character, and add life and vigor, beauty and order to all our actings

(*b*) Prov. xix. 2. (*c*) Prov. iii. 21—24.
(*d*) Rom. x. 2, 3.

ings toward God and man. Take heed therefore of an ignorant, ungovernable and misjudged love of you know not what, or you know not why; but beg of God, that your knowledge, and spiritual sense of divine things may increase together with your love; that he would give you, *not the spirit of fear*, to make you cowardly in his cause; but *the spirit of power*, or of holy resolution and courage, *and the spirit of love, and of a sound mind* (*e*), which the Apostle tells us God had given to him, and to others of his day; or that you may be *sound in faith*, and *in charity*, as it is expressed, *Tit.* ii. 2. and that ye may *know whom ye have believed*, and may *know and believe the love, that God hath to you*; and so may *dwell in God, who is love*, and, under his influence, may *dwell in love* to him and one another, and to all that belong unto him (*f*). This leads us to the next petition in our text, which is,

II. *That ye may approve things that are excellent.* ver. 10. former part, (εις το δοκιμαζειν).

The approving, here spoken of, is such as includes, and is the result of, examination, trial and proof; whereby we come to discern things that are excellent, (τα διαφεροντα) things that in a way of preference differ from others; and so approve of them, as having found them, upon judgment and experience, to be truly excellent. We are to *prove all things* by the unerring touchstone of God's word, and by a spiritual taste, according to it; not to throw our minds into a state of perpetual scepticism, like *children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine*, or like persons that are *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*; but with serious and earnest desire to *know the truth as it is in Jesus*; and to *receive it in the love of it*, that we may *hold fast that, which*, upon impartial search, trial and experience, appears to us *to be good* (*g*).

The

(*e*) 2 Tim. i 7. (*f*) 1 John iv. 16
(*g*) 1 Thess. v. 21.

The more acquaintance we have with the things of GOD, of his law and of his Goſpel; and the more they are tried and proved, the better they recommend themſelves to us. Hence ſaid the royal *Pſalmiſt*, *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good! Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in him* (*h*). And they, who have *taſted that the Lord is gracious*, will *deſire the ſincere*, (ἀδόλον) the pure, genuine, unadulterated *milk of the word, that they may grow thereby* (*i*).

It is a good thing that the heart be eſtabliſhed with grace (*k*); and nothing will keep us ſo ſteady in our evangelical principles, as a ſpiritual diſcerning of their divine authority, as revealed in the holy ſcriptures, and an experience of their ſweetneſs and power in our own ſouls, and of their happy influence unto all chriſtian love and obedience. It ſhould therefore be your concern and prayer, that you may be ſo far enlightened, and aſſiſted from above, in all your religious enquiries, as to be able to diſcern the difference between truth and error, right and wrong, good and evil, eſpecially in matters of the greateſt importance, with regard to the being, perfections and providence of GOD, and our entire dependence upon him, and accountableneſs to him; and with regard to the more peculiar articles of divine revelation: Theſe, in general, are ſuch as relate to the Father, Son and Spirit, as three adorable perſons in the one undivided Godhead; ſuch as relate to the free love and grace of the Father toward a choſen people, in the whole ſcheme of ſalvation; ſuch as relate to the perſon of CHRIST, God-man, and to his meritorious and efficacious mediation between GOD and ſinners of our apoſtate race; ſuch as relate to the ſupernatural operations, aids and aſſiſtances of the holy Spirit, in the application of the benefits of redemption; and ſuch as relate to the nature and neceſſity

(*h*) Pſal. xxxiv. 8.
(*i*) 1 Pet. ii. 2, 3.
(*k*) Heb. xiii. 9.

ceſſity of faith and repentance, and to our multiplied obligations to all holineſs, love and obedience.

You ſhould ſeek after a true diſcerning of theſe, and ſuch like concerning points; that your judgment, choice and eſteem of them, and attention to them, may be fixed and determined, in proportion to their real worth and excellence, and in oppoſition to things that differ from them. And, in the whole compaſs of what relateth to faith and practice, you ſhould carefully diſtinguiſh between thoſe doctrines and duties, which are of greater or leſſer moment; that you may give the higheſt preference to thoſe, which are moſt excellent, and may proportion your regards and zeal for thoſe, and other things, according to their reſpective weight and uſefulneſs in the chriſtian ſcheme. But it is time to go on to the next petition, which is,

III. *That ye may be ſincere, and without offence till the day of Chriſt*, ver. 10. latter part.

The word here uſed for ſincere (εἰλικρινεῖς) is taken either from things that are clarified by the heat, or are examined, and judged of in the light of the ſun-beams; and ſo intimates a ſincerity, that is pure and incorrupt, free from all hypocriſy or deceit, and ſuch as will bear the ſtricteſt examination.—*Without offence* (ἀπρόσκοποι) may relate either to not being offended ourſelves, or not giving offence to others, to occaſion wounding or falling. Some underſtand *ſincere*, as referring to GOD; and *without offence*, as referring to man: But I do not ſee why each of them may not refer to both: For ſincerity, I apprehend, is not ſo much a diſtinct grace; as it is an eſſential part of, and runs through all our graces and duties, and diſtinguiſheth them from falſe appearances, in their exerciſe both toward GOD and man. And as to being *without offence*, the Apoſtle in his account of that, at another time, ſays, *Herein do I exerciſe myſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence*, or *without offence* (it

(it is the same word that is used in our text) *toward God and toward man* (*l*). We may therefore very well consider both these expressions in our text, with this double reference. And the Apostle desired that the *Philippians* might continue in all these invariably, *till the day of Christ*, and with an eye to the solemn day of his appearing to judgment, when all things will be brought to light, and pass under the exactest Scrutiny; and, stripped of all false colors, will be seen, and judged of, just as they are.

What therefore you, my christian friends, should aim at, and be earnest in your prayers to God for, is, that you may be incorrupt in your doctrinal and practical principles, and may be upright in the temper of your spirits, in the exercise of every grace, and performance of every duty, and in all your behaviour toward God, and one another, toward your pastor, and toward all men, whether friends or enemies; that you may keep the doctrines of Christ pure and without mixture; that your hearts may be right with God according to them; that your faith and love, repentance and obedience, may be genuine, answerable to your holy profession of them; and that the whole of your conduct may be approved of God, and approve itself to your own consciences, and to the consciences of all those that you have to do with. How sweetly do the joys of faith, and of a good conscience, harmonize! They mutually assist each other, and neither of them can be preserved alone.

Let it therefore be your holy ambition that, together with your *rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh* (*m*), and your *rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in believing on an unseen Jesus* (*n*); you may likewise have *this rejoicing, the testimony of your consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of*

(*l*) Acts xxiv. 16. (*m*) Phil. iii. 3.
(*n*) 1 Pet. i. 8.

God, ye have your converſation in the world, and more abundantly towards one another, and toward him, who is now intruſted with the care of your ſouls; and that this may be ſo evident, as to be *acknowledged by them, even to the end* (*o*), as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of himſelf, and the *Corinthian* church.

You ſhould likewiſe take heed of entertaining any principles, relating to faith or practice, and of doing any thing, that would be an offence to GOD; that would grieve his holy Spirit; that would wound your own conſciences, or the conſciences of your fellow-chriſtians; or that would be an occaſion of ſtumbling, or falling, to yourſelves, or them. Watch and pray, and labor in the ſtrength of CHRIST, againſt all unſcriptural notions, and againſt all ſin; *leſt being led away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs* (*p*) in the faith, comfort and hope, fellowſhip and holineſs of the Goſpel.

All this you ſhould attend to, in the fear of GOD, with conſtancy and perſeverance, as thoſe that expect an awful day of reckoning, when *we muſt all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt*, and *every one of us ſhall give an account of himſelf to God* (*q*); and as thoſe who humbly depend on divine grace, *that he who hath begun the good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt* (*r*); and that he, who is faithful to his promiſes, will in his own way (which is the way of duty,) *confirm you to the end, that ye may be blameleſs in the day of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, who *is able to keep you from falling, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy* (*s*). Proceed we now to add a few words on the concluding part of this prayer, which is,

IV. *That ye may be filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God*, ver. 11.

Righte-

(*o*) 2 Cor. i. 12. 13.
(*p*) 2 Pet. iii. 17.
(*q*) Rom. xiv. 10, 12.
(*r*) Phil. i. 6.
(*s*) 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. and Jude 24.

Righteouſneſs in this place, as in many others, ſeems to be a general term, of much the ſame import with perſonal holineſs, and to conſiſt of ſuch things, in reference to GOD, ourſelves and others, as are termed righteouſneſs; becauſe they are right and fit in themſelves, and are due from us, according to the juſt and holy requirements of the moral law, that eternal and unchangeable rule of all righteouſneſs. *Fruits of righteouſneſs* is a metaphorical expreſſion, taken from good trees that bring forth good fruit; and as believers are called *trees of righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified* (*t*); ſo their correſpondent products are ſtiled *fruits of righteouſneſs*, as being holy in their nature, and proceeding from holy principles: For ſuch as is the tree, ſuch are its fruits, as our bleſſed LORD himſelf tells us, ſaying, *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit* (*u*); *either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or elſe make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit* (*x*).

The nature of a man muſt be changed, in its moral frame, by regenerating grace, before he can bring forth true fruits of righteouſneſs. Our Apoſtle ſuppoſes, that this *good work* was begun in theſe *Philippians* (*y*), and had already brought forth proper fruits of righteouſneſs: But he prayed that they might be *filled with them*, or abound in them yet more and more, like a tree richly laden with precious fruits; or, as he expreſſeth it, *Col.* i. 10. that *they might be fruitful in every good work, and increaſe in the knowledge of God*, to the ſatisfaction of their own ſouls, and the good of others.

And of theſe fruits of righteouſneſs he ſays, they *are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God.* Their being *by Jeſus Chriſt* may poſſibly refer not only to their original, but alſo to the ground of their

(*t*) Iſa. lxi. 3.
(*u*) Matt. vii. 18.
(*x*) Matt. xii. 33.
(*y*) chap. i 6.

acceptance, and to their redounding to *the glory and praise of God.—Praise and glory*, I take to be pretty much terms of the same import; unless glory should relate to the honor, that accrues to GOD from those fruits of righteousness themselves; and praise to the ascriptions of glory, that are made to him on their account: But be that as it will, these fruits of righteousness are *by Jesus Christ*, as all virtue for producing them is derived from him, *without whom*, he says, with regard to this very point, his own disciples *can do nothing* (z). They are also *by Jesus Christ*, as all their acceptance with GOD is through him: For believers, *as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ* (a). And they are *by Jesus Christ*, as the revenue of glory, which arises from them, passes to GOD through him, *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ* (b). In this manner our fruits of righteousness are to be brought forth, not to ourselves, as aiming at our own honor, reputation and character in them; but to GOD, as their ultimate end. And they really do turn to his praise and glory, when they are thus brought forth, and that with great variety and plenty.

It therefore concerneth you of this church of CHRIST, who are *God's husbandry* (c), and who severally are *planted in the house of the Lord*, in order to your *flourishing in the courts of our God*, to beg of him, that ye may *bring forth fruit to the latest age* (d), even the most excellent fruit, fruits of righteousness *in all holy conversation, and godliness*; in all sobriety, with respect to the government of your own passions, appetites and manners; in all righteousness and beneficence toward your fellow-christians, and fellow-creatures; and in all piety toward GOD, with regard to

(z) John xv. 5.
(a) 1 Pet. ii. 5.
(b) 1 Pet. iv. 11.
(c) 1 Cor. iii. 9.
(d) Psal. xcii. 13, 14.

to all his ordinances and commandments. And it ſhould be your daily and earneſt prayer and endeavour, by his grace, that you may abound in them exceedingly, on all fit and proper occaſions, even unto the richeſt fulneſs; that like a *tree planted by the rivers of water* you may *bring forth fruit in its ſeaſon* (*e*), as is ſaid of the godly man; and that all the *fruits of the Spirit*, as the Apoſtle calls them, *Gal.* v. 22, 23. may be found in you, and may evidently diſplay themſelves in *love*, *joy*, *peace*, *long-ſuffering*, *gentleneſs*, *goodneſs*, *faith*, *meekneſs*, *temperance*, and in all the duties of the religious and civil life, to which you may be called in your reſpective ſtations. And as ever you would indeed increaſe in your fruits of righteouſneſs, and bring them forth in a manner well pleaſing to GOD, and for his honor and glory, look to CHRIST for aſſiſtance and acceptance in them, *that God in all things may be glorified through him*; *to whom be praiſe, and dominion for ever and ever, Amen* (*f*).

Concluſion. Thus we have gone through the ſeveral parts of our text; and as the portion of time alloted to me for this ſervice is fully ſpent, and the diſcourſe hath been, all along, ſo much in a ſtrain of practical addreſs to you, the members of this Goſpel church, I muſt leave the further application of it to your own ſerious reflections, under the gracious light and influence of the bleſſed Spirit. Only, for a concluſion of the whole, permit me, my chriſtian friends, to beſeech you in the bowels of JESUS CHRIST, and to charge you in his name and preſence, and as you would anſwer it to him, *who ſhall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing, and his kingdom* (*g*), that, in recollecting what hath been humbly offered, you would particularly conſider it with a reference to your reverend paſtor, who is become ſo by your own choice: Pray for him, and that your love,

(*e*) Pſal. i. 3. (*f*) 1 Pet. iv. 11.
(*g*) 2 Tim. iv. 1.

which you have profeſſed in giving yourſelves up to his charge, may be continually, and yet more abundantly, growing in judicious and affectionate reſpects to him, for his work's ſake; becauſe of its importance to the glory of CHRIST, and your own edification and increaſe; and becauſe of the great difficulties, that will attend him, and the need he will have of your heartily and tenderly encouraging him, and uniting with him, in fulfilling it.

And as ever you would ſhew your regard to him, in the moſt endearing manner, and would profit by his miniſtry, and be *his hope and joy* now, and his *crown of rejoicing in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming* (*b*), let it be your fervent, importunate prayer, and your only ſtrife, to excel each other in love to CHRIST, and him, and one another, and in every other grace and duty; that, by means of his holy miniſtrations, and your ſubmitting to him in the LORD, *your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be ſincere, and without offence till the day of Chriſt; being filled with the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt unto the glory and praiſe of God.*

(*b*) 1 Theſſ. ii. 19.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

The Faith and Order of the Goſpel recommended.

Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr *John Angus*, *October* 26, 1748, at *Biſhop-Stortford*.

COLOS. II. 5.

——*Joying and beholding your order, and the ſtedfaſtneſs of your faith in Chriſt.*

THE church at *Coloſſe*, a city of the greater *Phrygia*, to whom this epiſtle was wrote, ſeem to have been converted by the miniſtry of *Epaphras*, of whom the Apoſtle ſpeaks with high commendation, *chap.* i. 7, 8. as his *dear fellow-ſervant, who was for them a faithful miniſter of Chriſt, who alſo declared unto him their love in the Spirit.* This *Epaphras* is ſaid to be *one of them*, and to have *had a great zeal for them*, chap. iv. 12, 13. But it is uncertain whether he, or *Archippus*, ſpoken of in *chap.* iv. 17, were their paſtor; or whether they were only colleagues in the work of the miniſtry among them; or whether *Archippus* ſucceeded *Epaphras*, after his

imprisonment with the Apostle at *Rome*, which we have an account of *Philem.* ver. 23.

But be this as it will, the Apostle *Paul* himself was so far from having planted this church, by his personal ministry, that he is most generally thought to mean the *Colossians*, as well as the *Laodiceans*, when he speaks of those, *that had not seen his face in the flesh*; chap. ii. 1. And yet, though so much a stranger to them, he, in his entrance on this epistle, expresses his great affection, and earnest prayer for them; his solicitous concern, lest they should be misled by any false teachers, that had arose among them; and his great thankfulness for, and abundant pleasure in, what he had heard of the grace of God toward them, and of its excellent fruits that appeared in them; and in the verse, which contains our text, he tells them, that *though he were absent in the flesh, yet was he with them in the Spirit, joying and beholding their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ.*

By his being *with them in the Spirit*, some suppose is meant his being present with them by a miraculous gift of the Spirit, whereby he was enabled to discern, at a distance, how things were with them, as *Elisha* discerned, by a divine impulse, what his servant had done, when he ran after *Naaman* the *Syrian*, 2 Kings v. 26. and as *Ezekiel* saw in *Babylon* what was done at *Jerusalem*, *Ezek. chapters* 8 and 40. And it is highly probable that, as our Apostle had the care of all the churches upon him, he on the present, and some other important occasions, as in 1 *Cor.* v. 3. was favored with such a sort of extraordinary knowledge. But this by no means excludes his being present likewise in heart and affection with the *Colossians*, in the ordinary way, which seems very naturally to be meant by his being with them *in the Spirit*, as that is opposed to his being *absent in the flesh*, and is very suitable to the great love he had expressed toward them. Upon the whole, I see no reason

reason why we may not take in both these senses, which are fully consistent one with the other.

Accordingly when he speaks in our text, of *joying and beholding*, that is, (by a *hendyadis*) rejoicing in his beholding, or because he beheld *their order, and the stedfastness of their faith in Christ*, it may be understood of the pleasure he took in the view he had, either by inspiration, or by reports, that had been made to him, of this happy state of things among them. And it is with admirable insinuation that he mentioned this his *joying and beholding*; it is in a manner that carried the most tenderly moving and endearing intimation of his good opinion of them, and great affection to them; as also an engaging hint, that it highly concerned them to persevere in those excellent things, which were so much to their commendation and his own joy; and that a departure from them, through the artifices of seducers, would be both extremely injurious and disgraceful to themselves, and grievous to him.

In further discoursing on these words, it may be proper to consider, by divine assistance,

I. The *order* of a Gospel church.

II. The *stedfastness of their faith in Christ*. And,

III. The *joy* that attends the *beholding* of these. Let us begin with,

I. The *order* of a Gospel church.

It was the constant custom of the Apostles and their assistants, wheresoever the Gospel of the grace of God had been blessed to the conversion of any considerable number of persons, to form them into churches, as appears through the history of the *Acts* of the Apostles, where we read of abundance of churches. We are told, that *Paul* said to *Barnabas*, *Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city, where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do* (*i*); and this is called *his going through* Syria *and* Cilicia, *confirming the churches*, ver. 41. which

(*i*) Acts xv. 36.

which ſuppoſes that they had been gathered before. There is therefore no room to doubt, but that thoſe famous chriſtians at *Coloſſe*, to whom the Apoſtle wrote, were brought into a church-ſtate; and they are conſtructively, though not expreſsly ſpoken of as a church, where the Apoſtle ſays, *When this epiſtle is read among you, cauſe that it be read alſo in the church of the* Laodiceans (*k*). Nor is it any objection againſt the *Coloſſians* being a church, that they are not ſo ſtiled in this epiſtle itſelf: For the ſame may be ſaid of the epiſtles to the *Epheſians* and the *Philippians*; and yet we are elſewhere told, *Acts* xx. 17. that there was a church at *Epheſus*; and the *Philippians* had their biſhops and deacons, *Phil.* i. 1. which undoubtedly proves that they were a church.

As to the order, which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of in our text, this may be conſidered with relation both to the whole church, as a body, and to its various members in their perſonal behaviour. We are led to the firſt of theſe views of the expreſſion, by his exhorting the church at *Corinth*, to do *all things decently, and in order* (*l*), and by his directing *Titus*, to *ſet in order the things that were wanting in* Crete (*m*): And we are led to the other view of order, as it ſtands oppoſed to particular members walking diſorderly, which our Apoſtle ſpeaks of, ſaying, *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walks diſorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us:* And *we hear that there are ſome which walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy bodies* (*n*). And both theſe will be taken in, if we conſider the order of a church of CHRIST, with reſpect to its conſtitution; its furniture with proper officers; its worſhip; its diſcipline; and the purity of its manners, together with the behaviour of its members toward one another, and their paſtor.

1. The

(*k*) Col iv. 16. (*l*) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.
(*m*) Tit. i. 5. (*n*) 2 Theſſ. iii. 6, 11.

1. The order of a church of CHRIST may be considered with respect to its constitution. — And here we may observe the three following particulars.

(1.) New testament churches, whose constitution we are now enquiring into, are congregational, or consist only of such christians as may, and ordinarily do, meet together in one place for religious worship and discipline.

The word church (εκκλησια) properly signifies an assembly called together, of what nature or kind soever it be. It is the word in the *Greek*, by which a legal assembly for civil affairs, and even the riotous concourse of people at *Ephesus* is expressed, where it is said, the *assembly was confused*; and *the town-clerk told them, their matter should be determined in a lawful assembly*; and thereupon *he dismissed the assembly* (*o*). But the new testament principally uses this word in the religious view, and that with various acceptation.

Sometimes it signifies the catholic invisible church, which consists of all the elect of GOD, that have been, are, or shall be called, and vitally united to CHRIST as their head; and conducted, under his efficacious influence, safe to glory. In this sense we read of *Christ's loving the church, and giving himself for it*, &c. and *of his being head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him, that fills all in all* (*p*); and with a view to their triumphant state in heaven, they are spoken of, as *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*; and as *the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven* (*q*): At other times it signifies the universal visible church, or kingdom of CHRIST, their sovereign LORD and King, which consists of all professing believers, wheresoever they are scattered, or are found in particular congregations,

(*o*) Acts xix. 32, 39, 41. (*p*) Eph. i. 22. and v. 25.
(*q*) Eph. v. 27. and Heb xii. 23.

tions, through the whole world. Thus, as I take it, we are to understand the Apostle, when he speaks of *God's setting some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers* (*r*), &c. The Apostles and prophets were set as extraordinary officers of extensive authority, in the universal visible church, like chief ministers of state in a kingdom; and teachers, or (as it is expressed *Eph.* iv. 11.) *pastors and teachers* were set as ordinary officers, to exercise ministerial and office-authority, under CHRIST in particular churches, which are included in the universal visible church, like mayors, bailiffs and recorders of cities and corporations in the kingdom of *Great Britain*; who, as such, are empowered to exercise their authority, not in the whole kingdom, nor in any of its counties, or other corporations; but only in those corporate bodies to which they stand immediately related, according to their charter under the king.

At other times, it seems to me, that the word church is used to signify a christian family, all of which are professed believers, joining together in the worship of GOD. These, as I am inclined to think, are meant by the churches, which we read of in one and another person's house. Thus in our epistle to the *Colossians*, chap. iv. 15. the Apostle saluted *Nymphas, and the church in his house*; and in his epistle to the *Romans*, chap. xvi. 3, 5. he greeted *Priscilla*, and *Aquila*, and the *church that was in their house:* Whereas, when not all, but only some in a family were converted, the stile is altered, and they are said to be *of the houshold* of such and such, and *the brethren that were with them*, as in *Rom.* xvi. 10, 11, 14, 15.

But in the most common sense of the word in the new testament, particular churches, erected for the celebration of sacred ordinances, are meant by it; thus

(*r*) 1 Cor. xii. 28.

thus it is generally to be understood with regard to the churches mentioned all along in the *Acts* of the Apostles, and the churches to which the epistles were directed. Hence we read of the church at *Corinth*, and at *Cenchrea*; the church at *Rome*, and at *Antioch*; the church at *Philippi*, and at *Jerusalem*, with several others, which are spoken of in the singular number, and which, as I apprehend, might easily be shewn, were no more than single congregations, that statedly used to assemble, as they had opportunity, in one and the same place. But when the churches in any province are mentioned, it is always in the plural number; as the *churches throughout all* Judea, *and* Galilee, *and* Samaria (*s*); some of which, most probably, were in villages, since we are told, *chap.* viii. 25. that the *Gospel had been preached in many villages of the* Samaritans. We also read of *the churches through* Syria *and* Cilicia, *chap.* xv. 41. *the churches of* Asia; *the churches of* Macedonia (*t*); *the churches of* Galatia; and *the churches of* Judea (*u*). But I no where find in all the new testament, that there were any provincial, or national churches; or that any pastors, elders, or representatives of churches, are ever called a church. The church is sometimes distinguished from them, as from its officers; but they are never distinguished by the name of a church, from those that they presided over, or represented.

It is commonly descriptive of a single congregation of the faithful, that ordinarily met together, with their proper officers, for the celebration of Gospel ordinances, and the exercise of holy discipline: Accordingly they are often spoken of as coming together, or being called together, or gathering together, and as assembling in one place, for those religious purposes; and these things are said of some of the largest of them, as particularly of the church at

(*s*) Acts ix. 31. (*t*) 1 Cor. xvi. 19. and 2 Cor. viii. 1.
(*u*) Gal. i. 2, 22.

at *Jeruſalem*, *that they were together*, *and that the twelve called the multitude of the diſciples unto them* (*x*); of the church at *Antioch*, that they were *gathered together*, chap. xiv. 27. and of the church at *Corinth*, that were ſpoken of, as *gathering together* (*y*); and as *coming together into one place*, chap. xi. 17, 20, and xiv. 26. This leads me to add, that

(2.) Theſe churches of CHRIST conſiſt of profeſſing believers, who, in the judgment of charity, are real ſaints.

Thus, they are ſpoken of in the inſcription of this epiſtle, which is to *the ſaints and faithful brethren in Chriſt at* Coloſſe, *chap.* i. 2. ſo the epiſtle to the *Romans* is directed to *all that be in* Rome, *beloved of God*, *and called to be ſaints*, chap. i. 7. The two epiſtles to the *Corinthians* are directed to *the church of God which is at* Corinth; *to them that are ſanctified in Chriſt Jeſus*, *called to be ſaints*, *with all the ſaints that are in all* Achaia (*z*). The epiſtle to the *Epheſians* is inſcribed *to the ſaints which are at* Epheſus, *and to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus* (*a*): That to the *Philippians* is directed *to all the ſaints in Chriſt Jeſus*, *which are at* Philippi, *with the biſhops and deacons* (*b*): And thoſe to the *Theſſalonians* are directed *to the church of the* Theſſalonians, *which is in God our father and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* (*c*), with an high encomium on their faith, love and obedience.

Thus all the churches, to whom our Apoſtle ſent his epiſtles, are deſcribed, as conſtituted of ſaints and faithful ones in CHRIST JESUS; except the churches of *Galatia*, who by the ſad defection of, at leaſt, great numbers of them from the doctrine of juſtification alone by CHRIST, through faith in him, had loſt the glory of their character; and ſo are barely ſtiled *the churches of* Galatia, without any com-

(*x*) Acts ii. 44. and vi. 2. (*y*) 1 Cor. v. 4.
(*z*) 1 Cor. i. 2. and 2 Cor. i. 1. (*a*) Eph. i. 1.
(*b*) Phil. i. 1. (*c*) 1 Theſſ. i. 1, &c. and 2 Theſſ i. 1, &c.

commendation of them, *chap.* i. 2. On the contrary, the Apostle expressed his deep concern and astonishment, that they were so soon perverted, *ver.* 6. and tells them, that he *travelled in birth again, till Christ were formed in them*; chap. iv. 19. which supposes that at first, they had made a credible profession of CHRIST, and of the Gospel, as he more clearly intimated they had done, in the beginning of the third chapter.—Hence we may observe, that

(3). These professing believers are formed into a church-state, by mutual agreement, for walking together in all the ordinances of CHRIST, according to the will of GOD.

As *Moses was faithful in all his house, as a servant*, in making the tabernacle, and all its utensils, *according to the pattern which was shewed him in the mount* (*d*); so *Christ was faithful to him that appointed him to his office, not* merely *as a servant*; *but* likewise *as a son* (*e*), who is LORD over his own house, in settling the form, and all the ordinances of it, according to the eternal model of the divine mind, which he, as one in counsel with the Father about it, was intimately acquainted with: And this he has done, upon the fundamental principles of society, by his own appointment of Gospel churches, which he intimated, when he gave them power and directions for the preservation of their purity and order, saying, *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on*

(*d*) Exod. xxv. 40. and xxvi. 30. (*e*) Heb. iii. 5, 6.

on earth, shall be loosed in heaven (*f*). How plainly, were not men to puzzle the cause by eager contentions for their own different forms of government, has our blessed LORD, in these passages, fixt the natural rights and powers of such churches as he was about to set up in the world, and given a sanction to them! And this he has further done by after-erections of Gospel churches, for worship and discipline, under the conduct of his inspired Apostles.

Now such churches must, in the nature of things, be voluntary societies, who, in obedience to the authority of CHRIST, and according to the charter of his word, agree, or confederate together, as incorporated bodies, to partake of the privileges, and perform the duties of a church-state; otherwise there would be no bond of union, or of spiritual and visible communion between them; no immediate right to the ordinances and privileges that are peculiar to a church; nor any obligation upon them to walk together, as a church, according to the rules that CHRIST has prescribed to them in his word. Hence, as soon as our blessed LORD had mentioned the powers, which he had committed to his church, in the place last cited, he in the very next verses, speaks of their agreeing to join in acts of religious worship, and assures them, that be their number ever so small, though but *two or three are gathered together in his name*, for such purposes, *there he is in the midst of them* (*g*). And as it is recorded of the churches of *Macedonia*, that *they first gave their ownselves to the Lord*, and then *to the Apostles*, as inspired directors of their affairs, *by the will of God* (*h*); so it is said of new converts, that were *added to the church at* Jerusalem, not only that *they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*; but that they likewise *continued daily*

(*f*) Matt. xviii. 15—18.
(*g*) Ibid. 18, 19, 20.
(*h*) 2 Cor. viii. 5.

daily with one accord in the temple (*i*), &c. which strongly intimates, that there was a voluntary agreement, or confederation to walk together in the ordinances, as well as doctrines of the LORD. And the Apostle takes notice to the church at *Corinth*, of their *professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ* (*k*).—So much for the order of a church of CHRIST, with respect to its constitution.—Proceed we now to

2. Consider it, with respect to its furniture with proper officers.

Its order cannot be completed without these, which are necessary unto the regular administration of ordinances, and conducting the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church; and are included in the offices of pastors and deacons. Such there were in the church at *Philippi*, to whom, with the bishops and deacons, the Apostle inscribed his epistle, *Phil.* i. 1. The word (επισκοποι) there rendered bishops, properly signifies overseers; and so it is translated, *Acts* xx. 28. where the Apostle having called *the elders* (τους πρεσβυτερους) *of the church of* Ephesus, as they are stiled, *ver.* 17. said *to them, Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers,* (επισκοπους) *to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.* This shews that bishops or overseers, and elders, are terms of the same import; and the work, which is here enjoined upon the elders, shews that they were such elders, as were pastors, whose office it was both to feed, and rule the flock, as the word, (ποιμαινειν) here used, signifies. They were *pastors to feed them with knowledge and understanding, according to God's own heart* (*l*), and they were *elders to rule well*, as also *to labor in the word and doctrine* (*m*): And so whatever belongs to the office of teaching and government is included in that of the pastor; and when churches are very large, or some other circumstances make it requisite for

(*i*) Acts ii. 41, 42, 46.
(*k*) 2 Cor. ix. 13.
(*l*) Jer. iii. 15.
(*m*) 1 Tim. v. 17.

edification, assistant teachers may be joined to them; or there may be co-pastors of the same church, as there were at *Philippi*, Phil. i. 1.

But as the sole management of the secular affairs of the church, and particularly relating to its poor, would intrench too much upon the pastor's direct and most important attendance unto its spiritual concerns, deacons as well as pastors, are to be chosen by, and from among themselves, and to be set apart in a solemn manner to that service. The institution of this office, together with the occasion of it, is recorded at large in the sixth chapter of the *Acts*.—— But I must hasten, therefore,

3. We may consider the order of a church, with respect to its worship.

A particular church of CHRIST is the seat of all ordinances; and when it is furnished with proper officers, and particularly with a pastor, it is in due order for the celebration of them. Churches indeed may, and ought to join together in the ordinances of general communion, whether they have a pastor, or not; and, when they have one, whether he be present, or not. The praises of the LORD may be sung by the whole body; and prayer may be performed in church assemblies by the mouth of any private brethren, that are properly qualified for it; as we are told *the church* at *Jerusalem* (probably in the absence of its pastor) *prayed without ceasing for* Peter, when he was in prison (*n*); and our blessed LORD speaking of the church, said, *If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven: For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (*o*). And preaching the word, and blessing the people in the name of the LORD, as well as prayer, are a proper province for such, as are only either stated, or occasional teachers among them. But the administration of

(*n*) Acts xii. 5. (*o*) Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

of the visible seals of the covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper, are ordinances of special communion; and therefore, the dispensing of them is peculiar to the office of a pastor, who receives his call to it from the church, and so from CHRIST by them, for the administration of those ordinances in particular, as well as for presiding in discipline, and being their mouth to GOD, and his mouth to them, in every other part of religious worship.

But the public administration of all ordinances, is usually to be with the concurring agreement of the pastor and the church, as to time and place, while the utmost care is to be taken, that there be no alterations, or additions of human invention, as to the ordinances themselves; but that they be dispensed only according to the institution of CHRIST, who has commissioned his servants *to teach* or (μαθητευσατε) *disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; *teaching them*, or instructing them, (διδασκοντες, see the note in my Paraphrase on this verse) *to observe all things whatsoever he has commanded them* (*p*). As ministers are not to be lords over GOD's *heritage*; *nor to have dominion over their faith, but to be helpers of their joy* (*q*); so neither they, nor the people, are to *call any man master upon earth*; *for one is their Master, even Christ*; *and they are all brethren* (*r*). Hence,

4. We may consider the order of a church, as to its discipline.

This is what we most commonly mean by church-order, as it relates to its polity in the admission, government and exclusion of its members. Our LORD speaking of an offending brother, that is not reclaimed by the private admonitions of his fellow-members, says in a place already quoted, *If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church*; *but if he*

(*p*) Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. (*q*) 1 Pet. v. 3. and 2 Cor. i. 24.
(*r*) Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican (*s*). Accordingly the Apostle *Paul*, instead of taking upon himself to cast the incestuous person out of the church at *Corinth*, was so tender of their rights, that he ordered *them, when they should be gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, to deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus:* (See the note in my Paraphrase on 1 *Cor.* v. 5.) And when they had done this, he calls it, *the punishment which was inflicted of many* (*t*); which shews that the censure was passed upon him by the concurring approbation and suffrage of the church. Hence, as in any society, the right of excluding, and of admitting members is the same; so a church of CHRIST having the power of excluding such persons, as appear to act inconsistent with their christian character, must needs have likewise a power of receiving such, as appear to be fit for communion with them. And therefore the Apostle directed this church at *Corinth* (*the many*, that had inflicted the ecclesiastical punishment upon the incestuous person) to *forgive him* upon his repentance, and to *confirm their love to him*, by receiving him again into their holy fellowship, *lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*, ver. 7, 8.

The church therefore are to judge of the qualifications of persons, that are proposed to their communion, whether they give credible evidence of their soundness in the faith, of a work of grace upon their hearts, and of a conversation becoming the Gospel of CHRIST, in order to their admission, or not.

And as to what concerns church-government, when *Paul* and *Barnabas* went to *Jerusalem* upon a question of great importance for the peace of the churches, relating to circumcision, *they were received of the church, and of the Apostles and elders* there; *and all the multitude*

(*s*) Matt. xviii. 17. (*t*) 2 Cor. ii. 6.

multitude kept silence, and gave them audience (*u*). And then the Apostle *James* summed up the debates, *saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me*, ver. 13. And after he had given his judgment in the case, *it pleased the Apostles and elders, with the whole church*, to determine, and join in a letter about it, which they sent to *Antioch* by *chosen men of their own company*, together with *Paul* and *Barnabas*; ver. 13—23. which shews that, even when the Apostles were presiding, the church had a right of being consulted, and of joining in the decision of such things, as related to their walking according to the mind and will of God. How much more must it be so in the ordinary course of church-proceedings, after all pretences to inspiration are ceased! Hence,

5. We may consider the order of a church with respect to the purity of its manners, and the behaviour of its members towards one another, and their pastor.

As they are called to be saints, and are so by profession, they ought to behave, as such, in all holy conversation and godliness, that they may *adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things*, in all civil, moral and religious deportment; may *live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*; may walk by rule, and fill up all the relations of life with the duties of them, and every duty with a suitable exercise of grace; and so may *walk honestly, and in wisdom toward them that are without*, or in such an exemplary, honorable, useful and beneficent, prudent, cautious and upright manner, as shall recommend the ways of God to others, that they, *seeing their good works, may glorify their father, which in heaven* (*x*).

And as to the behaviour of church-members one towards another, it should be with concord and harmony, with faithfulness, tenderness, and brotherly love, as those that ought to be kindly affectionate one towards another, and concerned for each other's

(*u*) Acts xv. 4, 12. (*x*) Matt. v. 16.

welfare in temporal, and especially in spiritual things: They ought not to be strangers one to another, or forsake the assembling of themselves together; but should watch over, and admonish one another, as occasions require; should *bear with one another's burdens and infirmities, and so fulfil the law of Christ*, and take heed of giving, or readily taking offence; and should endeavour to *please one another for good to edification*, and to *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. It ought to be the concern of every member, that he, through grace, may fill up the proportion, which he ought to bear in the body of CHRIST; the pastors and deacons fulfilling the duties of their respective offices with faithfulness and diligence; and private members discharging the duties of their places with meekness and holy fervor: These should help the church with their prayers, and chearfully contribute, according to their abilities, to the expence that is necessary for supporting the ministry; and, in conjunction with the officers, for relieving the poor; and for defraying other charges, that belong to their church-state.

And it is particularly their duty to love and honor those, *that are set over them in the Lord, for their work's sake*; to bear them daily upon their hearts at the throne of grace; to do all that in them lies to vindicate their characters from all unjust aspersions; to encourage their hearts, and strengthen their hands in their work, to attend their ministrations, and all church assemblies, as much as possible, on the LORD'S-DAYS and other days; and to keep, and walk together in all the ordinances of the LORD JESUS. In these things they should *submit themselves one to another in the fear of God* (*y*), and *obey those that have the rule over them*, as far as what they inculcate is according to the word of GOD; and should *submit themselves* to their just and seasonable reproofs: For *they watch for their souls, as they that must*

(*y*) Eph. v. 21.

must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief (z).—Thus we see, in some instances, wherein the order of a church of CHRIST consists; though I have had time, but little more than to hint a few things about it, and must be still shorter in what remains.—The next thing is to consider,

II. The *stedfastness of their faith in Christ.*

He, in his person and offices, is the object of their faith: And by faith in him may be meant both the doctrine, and the grace of faith; for faith in scripture is sometimes put for one, and sometimes for the other. It signifies the doctrine of faith, or what we are to believe concerning CHRIST, when it is said that *Paul preached the faith, which once he destroyed* (a); and when believers are exhorted *to strive together for the faith of the Gospel* (b); and *to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints* (c). But it is more generally used for the grace of faith, whereby we not only assent to the doctrine of CHRIST, upon a divine testimony; but likewise approve of him, and embrace or receive, and trust in him with our whole hearts, according to the revelation that is made of him in the Gospel. Thus, for instance, it is to be understood, when the scripture speaks of GOD's *fulfilling in us the work of faith with power*; of *the trial of our faith*; of *living by faith*; of *faith's encreasing, and growing exceedingly*, and the like.

Both these senses may be taken into the Apostle's view, when he speaks of *the stedfastness of the* Colossians *faith in Christ:* For with respect to the doctrine of faith, he speaks, in the verse next but one after our text, *ver.* 7. of their being *established in the faith, as they had been taught*; and, in the following verse, *ver.* 8. cautions them, to *beware, lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* And with respect to the grace of faith,

(z) Heb. xiii. 17. Phil. i. 27.
(a) Gal i. 23.
(c) Jude 3.

he takes notice, in the verſe immediately after the text, *ver.* 6. of their having *received Chriſt*, with a ſpecial reference to what he had there mentioned about their faith in him, ſaying, *as ye have therefore received Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, ſo walk ye in him.* In both theſe ſenſes then, the Apoſtle *rejoiced to behold the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith*, that they not only at firſt received the doctrine of CHRIST, and believed in him for eternal life, according to it; but were alſo ſtedfaſt therein.

The word (στερεωμα) tranſlated ſtedfaſtneſs, ſignifies ſolidity, firmneſs, or ſtrength, as alſo a prop or ſupport. Were we to take it in the laſt of theſe ſenſes, it might intimate that their faith, as reſting on CHRIST, according to Goſpel-diſcoveries of him, was the prop of their ſouls, and would bear up their patience, hope, comfort and holineſs, unto complete ſalvation, as they were *built upon their moſt holy faith* (*d*); and ſo were *rooted and built up in him*, as it is expreſſed a little after our text; ver. 7. and were *built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner-ſtone*, as you have it in *Eph.* ii. 20. But according to the other ſenſes of the word, which ſeem to be chiefly intended, *the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith in Chriſt*, may ſignify,

1. Its ſubſtantial ſolidity, in oppoſition to flaſhy notions, and corrupt mixtures.—It is a ſolid judicious faith, upon deliberation and choice, under the light and influence of the bleſſed Spirit, according to the pure unmixed word of GOD. It is ſeated in the underſtanding and will, and not in blind and flighty paſſions; and *ſtands not in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God* (*e*). It is rooted in CHRIST, and not blended with *philoſophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men*; nor miſguided by the ſubtle artifice of enticing words, which it is oppoſed to in our context, *ver.* 4, 7, 8.—Or, *the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith in Chriſt*, may ſignify,

2. Its

(*d*) Jude 20. (*e*) 1 Cor. ii. 5.

2. Its strength, in opposition to weakness.—It is a firm persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, and of the worth and excellency of CHRIST; of his faithfulness, power and grace, and of the suitableness and perfection of his righteousness; and a holy confidence in him, or intire reliance and dependence upon him alone, in his whole character, for all salvation, notwithstanding any objections that can be raised against him, and the many discouragements we find in ourselves. It is a stedfast or strong faith, like that of *Abraham*, who *against hope believed in hope, and being not weak in faith, considered not his own body, now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of* Sarah's *womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able to perform* (*f*). — Or it may signify,

3. Its stedfastness and constancy, in opposition to wavering. — It is a steady unshaken faith, which abides immoveably on its proper foundation; and, like its kindred grace, hope, is *as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, which enters into that within the veil* (*g*), and enables it to ride out every storm. Through this stedfastness of faith, we are *no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ* (*h*): We hereby *continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel* (*i*); and *are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul* (*k*).—Or, *the stedfastness of their faith in Christ*, may signify,

4. A

(*f*) Rom. iv. 18—21.
(*g*) Heb. vi. 19.
(*h*) Eph. iv. 14, 15.
(*i*) Col. i. 23.
(*k*) Heb. x. 39.

4. A holy reſolution and courage, in oppoſition to ſhyneſs and cowardice in their profeſſion of it.—Faith is ſometimes put for the profeſſion of it; as when the Apoſtle ſpeaks of his *hearing of the faith of* theſe *Coloſſians*; chap. i. 4. and ſays of the *Romans*, chap. i. 8. that *their faith was ſpoken of throughout the whole world*; and of the *Theſſalonians*, that *in every place their faith to God-ward, was ſpread abroad* (*l*); this could be only by their profeſſing of it. And ſo *the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith in Chriſt*, may intimate ſuch an undaunted openneſs, freedom and reſolution, in their profeſſion of his name, Goſpel and ways, as carried them above being *aſhamed of him, or his words, in the midſt of an adulterous and ſinful generation*; and made them *hold faſt the profeſſion of their faith*, in the face of all oppoſition and danger, *without wavering*, as the Apoſtle exhorted the believing *Hebrews* to do, *chap.* x. 23.—Theſe ſhort hints muſt ſuffice for what concerns *the ſtedfaſtneſs of our faith in Chriſt*. And we have room to add but a few words on the laſt thing propoſed, which is,

III. The *joy* that attends the *beholding* of theſe.

The Apoſtle *joyed in his beholding the order* of the *Coloſſian* church, *and the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith in Chriſt*. And whereſoever theſe are found in any church of CHRIST, or profeſſors of his name, it is matter of exceeding joy, as to themſelves, ſo to their paſtor, and to all the ſaints and ſervants of the LORD, that are acquainted with it, or hear of it. They heartily rejoice in it, as the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST is thereby honored, and his church appears in all the beauties of truth and holineſs, love and peace, and is abundantly edified: They rejoice in it, as a becoming repreſentation is thereby made of the authority and grace, doctrines, ordinances and ways of the LORD; as vital and experimental, pure and undefiled religion is thereby recommended to others;

(*l*) 1 Theſſ. i. 8.

others; and as their own faith is thereby confirmed and established: And they rejoice in it, as such churches thereby evidently appear to be lovely patterns and examples to those, that are planted round about them; and as other believers are thereby encouraged to come, and join in their faith and order, and in all holy communion with them.

But an enlargement on these things must be left to the reflections of your own minds, under the guidance and blessing of the holy Spirit. And for an application of all this particularly to you, the church of the living GOD, that are now met on this most solemn and important occasion, I shall only suggest the two following thoughts.

Application. 1. Look well to your faith and order, that there may be matter of rejoicing in both.

You have hitherto, blessed be GOD, kept the faith and order of the Gospel; and now the LORD has mercifully looked upon your destitute state, and sent you a pastor, I trust, *after his own heart, to feed you with knowledge and understanding.* Go on, my christian friends and brethren, in the name and strength of the LORD GOD, to maintain your *stedfastness in the faith of Christ*, and your holy profession of it, free from all corrupt mixtures, and without wavering, fear, or fainting: And go on in your Gospel-order, in all the remaining parts and branches of it, with regard to worship and discipline; and with regard to your purity in life and conversation, and your mutually harmonious, regular and affectionate behaviour one towards another, as becometh saints, and brethren in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel.—To conclude.

2. Labor on your part, by divine grace, to fulfil the duties you owe to your worthy pastor, who is now set over you in the LORD.

See to it, as ever you would be faithful to the solemn engagements of this day, and answer it at the

the final judgment, that you behave, as in the fear of GOD, with tenderneſs, love and reſpect towards him, for his work's ſake. Submit your conſciences to every word of GOD, whether it be in a way of inſtruction, or exhortation, or of caution and rebuke, or of encouragement and comfort, that ſhall be diſpenſed by him; and ſubmit to his rule and government over you, according to that word. Take heed of grieving him by a licentious, or in any reſpect an unholy and diſorderly walk; by a contentious, or an unſettled ſpirit; or by growing cool toward religion, or towards him, and deſerting, or ſlighting his miniſtry: Attend upon it with reverence, conſtancy and candor, with chearfulneſs and diligence. Support him in it, by liberal contributions of your temporal good things, according to your reſpective abilities, as a juſt return for the better ſpiritual things, which, at the expence of his time and talents, ſtudies and labors, are communicated to you. Strengthen his hands in his work by unanimity, affection and earneſt prayer; and endeavour to encourage him by all means in it; and to make him every way as comfortable, as poſſible, in his faithful diſcharge of the duty toward you, to which he will be directed and excited, in the name of the LORD, by my reverend brother, who is to addreſs a word of exhortation to him. May the great Head of the church command his bleſſing on what has been, and may yet further be delivered; and return an anſwer of peace to all our prayers!

SERMON

SERMON XV.

The Reasonableness of Believers dying, and the greater Advantage they will have by JESUS CHRIST, as the Resurrection and the Life, than if they were not to die; with the Importance of believing this.

Occasioned by the Death of the late Reverend Mr *John Asty*, *January* 20, 1729-30, *ætat.* 54. Preached *February* 8, to the Church in *Rope-maker's-Alley*, of which he was Pastor, in answer to his and their Desire, and published at their Request; with an Enlargement of what relates to his Life and Character.

JOHN XI. 25, 26.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?

THE frequent return of mournful solemnities of this nature, among the churches in and about this great city, for a few years past, is apt to fill a considerate and serious mind with affecting apprehensions, as if evil days were coming on

on the earth, and GOD were apace withdrawing his guidance and defence, and the glory were departing from us. It may justly occasion pathetic exclamations, something like that of *Joash*, when *Elisha* was sick unto death, and *he wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariots of* Israel, *and the horsemen thereof* (*m*)!

Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever (*n*)? We are all of one mortal make; ministers are as frail and dying men as their hearers. But when GOD houses his faithful servants so fast, it is a sad omen to our world. He seems to be tearing us in his wrath, while he thus breaks us with breach upon breach. This day looks back with a sorrowful aspect upon one, and may bring to remembrance many others, that lately were burning and shining lights in the church below, and are now seen, and shall be heard among us, no more. But *God's words and his statutes, which he commanded them* to deliver in his name, still speak to us, and will *take hold of us* (*o*), in a way of judgment or of mercy, according as they belong to us respectively. Their messages from the LORD still live after they are dead: And as for themselves, though they are no longer in our world, their spirits live with CHRIST in a better; and though their bodies are now mouldering in the dust, they shall be quickned again to a glorious immortality. We may be well assured of this from our text, where, on occasion of the death of one whom JESUS loved, he said of himself, *I am the resurrection and the life*, &c.

These words are our LORD and Savior's answer to *Martha*'s profession of faith about the general resurrection of the dead at the last day. *Jesus* had *said unto her, Thy brother*, meaning *Lazarus*, who was lately dead, *shall rise again*, ver. 23. She, it seems, understanding him to speak of the general resurrection,

(*m*) 2 Kings xiii. 14. (*n*) Zec. i. 5.
(*o*) Zec. i. 6.

tion, *says unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day*, ver. 24. This was an antient article of the church's faith, and was most generally received and acknowledged as such, though opposed and denied by the sect of the *Sadducees*, the sceptics of that age (*p*). The Apostle *Paul* ranked it amongst the doctrines *written in the law and the prophets*; and, speaking of the body of the *Jews*, averred, that *they themselves allowed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust* (*q*). There are several intimations of this in the old testament; and it is reckoned among *the principles of the doctrine of Christ* in the new (*r*).

Martha went into this common faith; but did not think this a direct and immediate relief, as to her present loss; nor did she understand the peculiar concern CHRIST had, as a principal agent, or proper efficient cause in raising the dead: Her thoughts stuck in general conceptions, that GOD by his infinite power would one day do it, and that CHRIST had such an interest with GOD, that if he would ask an immediate return of her brother to life again, *God would give it him*, ver. 22. And therefore to lead her on to what was further designed for her present comfort, and to direct and improve her faith in himself for her own eternal salvation; *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life*, &c.

In these words we have,

I. CHRIST's character of himself, *I am the resurrection, and the life.*

The benignity and the grandeur of this character, together with his gracious and sovereign way of asserting it, proclaim the Savior and the GOD. What can be more majestic and divine, beneficent and endearing, than this declaration concerning himself, *I am the resurrection, and the life.* His capacity of being so, must be divine; and his acting according to

(*p*) Acts ii. 3. (*q*) chap. xxiv. 14, 15.
(*r*) Heb. vi. 1, 2.

to it, must be founded on his mediation. None but a GOD could be the resurrection and the life; and none but an atoning Savior could make it meet that a righteous GOD should be so to guilty mortals. Our LORD himself died and rose again, that he might be the resurrection and the life to others; and he is not barely an instrument herein, as *Martha* apprehended, but he is the efficient cause, working by his own power to produce that great effect. *The dead shall hear his voice and live* (*s*). They shall be raised, and immortalized by an infinite power inherent in himself, *who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself* (*t*).

He is the principal or head of the resurrection, *the beginning* ἀρχὴ, and the *first-born*, πρωτότοκος, *from the dead* (*u*), who rose by his own power, and will raise us after his own example. He is the fountain of life; *In him was life, and the life was the light of men* in the order of nature; and *he has life in himself* in the order of grace (*x*); and *as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickneth them, even so the Son quickneth whom he will* (*y*). Hence he is called, by way of eminence, *the life*, in our text, and in other places. See *John* xiv. 6. and 1 *John* i. 2. And he is stiled *the true God, and eternal life* (*z*). He is the author of the resurrection of all mankind; *For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation* (*a*). He is the resurrection to all; but the life only to some. The state of the wicked, after their resurrection, is usually in scripture called death, and never life: This name belongs

(*t*) John v. 25.
(*u*) Col. i. 18.
(*y*) John v. 21, 26.
(*a*) Ibid. 28, 29.
(*t*) Phil. iii. 21.
(*x*) John i. 4.
(*z*) Ibid. v. 20.

belongs only to the bleſſed; and *the reſurrection of damnation*, is here oppoſed to *the reſurrection of life*. The laſt of theſe is principally intended in our text. Our bleſſed Savior is the reſurrection in order to life, and he is the life for eternity after it. We have,

II. His explication of this character, with a reference to thoſe who ſhall ſhare in the benefit of it. *He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth, and believeth in me, ſhall never die.* q. d. "Though the believer muſt die like "other men, and ſuppoſing he were dead, as *Lazarus* is, yet ſhall he live again, if not in this world, "yet in a better; and whoever now lives in this "world, and while he does ſo believeth in me, ſhall "never die as other men do, or ſo as not to riſe "unto life again: Or, as it might be better rendred, "ſhall not die for ever; ὁ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα."

CHRIST will be *the reſurrection* to his body, and *the life* to his ſoul and body too, that his whole perſon may live in the regions of light, and love, and joy for ever. The ſecond death ſhall never have any power over him, he ſhall not die eternally. We have,

III. His queſtion to *Martha*, with relation to what he had ſaid, *Believeſt thou this?* q. d. "Believeſt "thou not only that there ſhall be a reſurrection at "the laſt day; but believeſt thou this concerning "me, that I am the quickner of the dead, and the "author of eternal life? And believeſt thou this "concerning all who believe in me, that they ſhall "riſe to eternal bleſſedneſs? If thou haſt this faith, "it will compoſe thy troubled ſpirit under all its "preſent diſtreſs, and open ſprings of joy amidſt "thy preſent ſorrows; it will ſatisfy thee that thy "brother, whom I love, is among thoſe that ſhall "be happy for ever; and that, if I pleaſe, I can "even reſtore him to thee again, by raiſing him "now from the dead; and it will give thee com-

" fortable prospects of thy being for ever happy " with him."

In farther discoursing on these words, I shall, by divine assistance, briefly proceed upon three propositions, closing each of them with practical reflections.

The first I shall begin with is this,

Prop. I. That believers themselves are not exempted from dying.

A resurrection supposes a preceding death; and our blessed LORD speaks of believers living, though they were dead. *It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment* (*b*). The grave is *the house appointed for all living* (*c*). And *the living know*, but alas! how little do they consider, *that they shall die* (*d*). *There is no man that hath power over the Spirit, to retain the Spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it* (*e*). And though *righteousness delivereth from* a judicial *death* (*f*); yet it does not absolutely deliver from dying: For, in this sense, *the righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come* (*g*). High and low, young and old, male and female, wise men and fools, the healthy and the infirm, saints and sinners, magistrates, ministers, and other people, all must die. It is a standing law or ordinance of GOD upon the entrance of sin; and, except *Enoch* and *Elias*, that have been translated, and those that shall be alive upon earth at CHRIST's second appearance; who, as the Apostle says, *shall be changed at the last trump* (*h*), we have no room to imagine, that any ever were or shall

(*b*) Heb. ix. 27.
(*c*) Job xxx. 23.
(*d*) Eccles. ix. 5.
(*e*) chap. viii. 8.
(*f*) Prov. x. 2
(*g*) Isai. lvii. 1.
(*h*) 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52,

ſhall be exempted from it. How, or in what manner thoſe believers ſhall be changed, that ſhall be alive on earth at the conſummation of all things, we cannot ſay; but, for what we know, there may be ſomething in it as painful and ſurprizing as in dying, ſince the change will be upon mortal bodies (*i*), and that change will be as great upon them, as the reſurrection will make upon the bodies of thoſe that ſleep in JESUS.

CHRIST, if he pleaſed, could as eaſily have ſecured all his people from dying, and taken them up immediately in their ſeveral generations, ſoul and body, from earth to heaven, as exempt ſome, and raiſe the bodies of others from the grave. Though their *bodies*, as well as others, *are dead*, or become mortal, *becauſe of ſin* (*k*); yet he that has taken away the ſting of death from them, could have taken away its ſtroke too: There is merit enough in his blood and righteouſneſs for both, if infinite wiſdom had ſeen fit ſo to order it, as appears from the inſtances that have been, and ſhall be of that ſort. And yet, in the uſual ſtated courſe of things, through all ages till the laſt day, the general law of mortality takes place on them, as well as others.

In bringing the many ſons to glory, there is a beautiful conformity of the members of CHRIST's myſtical body to himſelf, their head. They, in the ordinary courſe of things, die and riſe again after his example: And they that ſhall be *caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* (*l*), at his ſecond coming, will be conformed to him in his own aſcenſion, who, whilſt he was converſing with his diſciples on earth, was *taken up from them, and a cloud received him out of their ſight* (*m*).

But it was not fit that the law of mortality ſhould be reverſed with reſpect to the generality of believers:

(*i*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.
(*k*) Rom. viii. 10.
(*l*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.
(*m*) Acts i. 9.

For if they, in their several generations, were to be translated, and unbelievers were to die, a conformity to CHRIST in his death and resurrection, would utterly fail from among them; the wicked only would rise again; and the resurrection at the last day would be all horror, without any mixture of awful joy; its agreeable solemnity, and the glory of the great Redeemer in swallowing up death in victory, and calling the inhabitants of the dusty regions into immortality and life, would be lost; the natural course of things in our present state of frailty and dangers must be stopped, or inverted, as to them that should be translated; and a constant series of unnecessary miracles in their translation must be brought upon the stage; the belief of a future state would be in a manner forced upon the world; and yet, some arguments for a general judgment would be weakened, and that judgment itself would be daily anticipated, by an obvious determination of every one's state beforehand, in the view of all that knew them; and such a visible and important difference, made in our world, might have very unhappy effects upon it.

It might strike too forcibly upon us in this imperfect state, where sensible objects are so apt to impress and govern us. The expectants of a translation would be apt to give way to an impatience of continuing here, under all the troubles of their present warfare, to neglect the necessary means of their preservation, to tempt providence, and unwarrantably throw themselves into the mouth of dangers, and to abate in their natural affections to their nearest relations in life, and in their tender sympathy with their dying friends. And it is probable that, while these were seen to be translated, others, who should expect to die, would be dispirited, like persons under a sentence for dreadful execution, and be swallowed up with so much fear and sorrow, as to unfit them for the common business and duties of life.

The

The translation of one sort of people, and the death of others, might lay a foundation for pride and envy, reproach and scorn, confusion and every evil work, among the families, societies, and friends left behind them. Some would be apt to boast, and overvalue themselves, on the account of their translated friends and relatives; and others would fall under reproach on account of their dead relations and friends. The whole world would be perpetually filled with disappointment and surprize, to see some die, and others translated, contrary to all former thoughts and expectations about them. This might shock some, and stumble others; imbolden some in sins and errors, that any of the translated had fallen into; and discourage others in some good ways of GOD, under a splendid profession of which any died; and it might tempt others to an intire indifference, as to all extremes that ever had been found amongst any of the translated. It would be apt to lead us into wrong measures of judging about some things, by the translation or death of the men that practised them, rather than by the word of GOD; and of judging about some principles and practices by persons, rather than about persons by them. It would encourage presumptuous hopes in some, and groundless fears in others. It would take off the terrors of death from some, that ought to be most afraid of it; and subject others to those terrors, that ought to be most comforted against it. It would leave us inconsolable under the loss of dead friends, and shake the faith and hope of weak christians, that were converted by the ministry of such, as should afterwards die. For these and such like reasons, we may suppose infinite wisdom has ordered, that believers themselves should not be exempted from dying.

Now for our reflections upon this.

Reflect. 1. What wonder is it that ministers, as well as others, die?

The reasons for it are the same with respect to them, as with respect to other believers. The most excellent and eminent among them are but earthen vessels, of the same brittle frame, and sinful infirmities with other men; they are under the same law of mortality, and are naturally liable to the same distempers and disasters in life with them: Why then should it be wondered at, that the same sort of diseases and mischiefs, which lead the way to death, and carry off others, reach them, and have the same effect on them? Were they to live here always, their lot would be worse than that of other christians, who die and go to heaven; and were they to be caught up thither, without dying, the world would idolize them: It is therefore an instance of divine wisdom and goodness in the government of the world, that they, as well as others, should die.

2. How much more should it be our concern, that we may not be unprepared for death, than that we must die?

The stroke of death is unavoidable, but its sting may be escaped by the grace of God through a Redeemer: And if thou art interested in him, and thereby escapest its sting, its stroke will do thee more good than harm; all blessings, and no curse shall be in it, and the second death, which is worst of all, shall have no power over thee; for *he that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death* (*n*). But if thou art in thy sins, in an unconverted and unpardoned state, out of Christ, and thereby exposed to death's sting, nothing can be more dreadful than for thee to die; for all such *shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death* (*o*). Why then shouldst thou be afraid of bare dying? And why should not thy principal care and concern be exercised about a due preparation for that unavoidable thing, that it may not be

(*n*) Rev. ii. 11. (*o*) Rev. xxi. 8.

be an execution of the curse upon thee, and that its eternal consequences may be inexpressibly joyous, instead of turning to thy utter confusion?

In order to this, let thy concern, endeavour, and prayer be for such things as these; *viz.* that thou mayst be found in CHRIST, before thou art found by death; that thou mayst be washed from thy sins in his blood, and mayst have his righteousness upon thee for justification of life through faith in him; that thou mayst be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light by heart-changing, sanctifying grace; that thou mayst have nothing to do in thy last moments, but to die, being beforehand safe in CHRIST for eternity, and having done the work and duty of thy day, and left nothing undone that was necessary for thee to do, relating to this world or the next, against the dying time; that thou mayst be in temper and inclination fit to die; ready to leave this world, like one that has *fought the good fight, finished thy course, and kept the faith*; and ready to go to CHRIST, like one that has the strongest breathings of soul after him, and the clearest evidence of thy claims, through him, to the *crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto thee*; and that thou mayst sleep in JESUS, among those whom GOD will bring with him. Hence we may observe,

Prop. II. That CHRIST will be better to believers in a resurrection to eternal life, than if they had never died.

Though they were dead, yet shall they live; they shall not die for ever, and shall never die any more. Were they always to live in this imperfect state and world, it would be but a sort of honorable exile from their Father's kingdom, court and presence: And though such an exile is better than they deserve; yet it does not come up to the dignity of their state of grace, to the great capacities and appetites for enjoyment, they are formed with, nor to the bounteous

design of their Savior's love and merit. They must die in the ordinary course of things, or pass under a change equivalent to death, if they are alive at CHRIST's second coming, before they can be perfectly happy, and ennobled with all the honors of their adoption, or before they can reap the full benefits of his redemption: And who would not be willing to die, to come at these?

It is but dying out of our present world into a better; out of a world, where we were born in sin, into a world from which, and for which, we are born again by grace; out of a world of sin and sorrows, into a world of unspotted purity, and unmingled joys; out of a world of darkness, disappointments and fears, into a world of unclouded light, and assured confidence; out of a world of weakness, weariness, sickness and pain, which make this life our burden, and enfeeble all our sallies towards a better, into a world free from all encumbrance of body or mind, and adapted for all enlargement in the best of services and fruitions; out of a world infested with numerous and malicious enemies, visible and invisible, into a world where GOD and CHRIST, saints and angels dwell together in perfect friendship; out of a world of discord, jars and tumults, into a world of all harmony, love and peace; out of a world of oppression and reproach, into a world of liberty and glory; and out of a world, whose best accommodations to make it tolerable perish in the using, into a world that abides in all its great felicities for ever. In a word, it is but dying out of a world of all imperfections, into a world as perfect as we can wish it to be. Death is only a passage to believers from a howling wilderness, to the land of promise; from a vale of tears to the mount of vision; from a field of battle, to crowns and thrones of glory in their Father's kingdom.

And it is but half the man, and that his meaner part, that dies. They that *kill the body, are not able to*

to kill the soul (*p*). When the *dust returns to the earth as it was, the spirit returns to God who gave it* (*q*): It does not die with the body, but departs from it: And the believer's soul takes an immediate flight to CHRIST, *which is far better* (*r*). It is *that day with him in paradise*; no sooner *absent from the body*, but *present with the Lord* (*s*).

When the dying time approaches, he supports, and often comforts departing saints, with joyous prospects of the world they are going to, by which they *know that when their earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens* (*t*). And when death executes its commission upon them, he secures them from its sting; they do not die under the guilt of sin, or under the curse, or condemning sentence of the law: *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ* (*u*). A blessing, instead of a curse, is pronounced by the Spirit of truth on them that die in him; *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord* (*x*).

He will likewise heal the wound and breach that death makes upon them; and will recover their mouldering dust from the power of the grave, by a glorious resurrection: Then shall this *corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality* (*y*). It shall be awakened out of the dust of the earth, and rebuilt in beauteous form: This *vile body shall be fashioned like to Christ's glorious body* (*z*); that *as we have born the image of the earthy, we may also bear the image of the heavenly* (*a*). And oh the transport! when soul and body, both adorned with celestial qualities since their separation, and better matched than

(*p*) Matt. x. 28.
(*q*) Eccles. xii. 7.
(*r*) Phil. i. 23.
(*s*) 2 Cor. v. 8.
(*t*) Chap. v. 1.
(*u*) 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.
(*x*) Rev. xiv. 13.
(*y*) 1 Cor. xv. 53.
(*z*) Phil. iii. 21.
(*a*) 1 Cor. xv. 49.

than ever, shall meet again; both immortal, spritely and active, and jointly capable of the illustrious visions, entertainments and employments of the heavenly state, jointly entitled and adjudged to them, and jointly disposed for them, vigorous and harmonious in them! CHRIST will then make them a complete, ample, and eternal amends for all the short and dying agonies they felt at their former parting, and for their absence from each other during their state of separation; for thenceforth they shall be inseparably united, and *be ever with the Lord* (*b*). To say this, that they shall *be ever with the Lord*, is to say all that is great and good, happy and glorious. Thought can go no further, it cannot stretch beyond the blessedness included in this; for *in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore* (*c*).

Now what better reflection can we make on this, than what the Apostle leads us to, which is,

Reflect. *Comfort one another with these words* (*d*).

This includes comforting yourselves, O christians, as well as one another, with them. Comfort yourselves and one another against the fears of death, with the hopes of the better things that CHRIST will do for you who believe, than if you were to be kept from dying out of your present state: Comfort yourselves and one another with the thoughts of your dead christian friends, that they have got the start of all the living in our world, and are inexpressibly happier with CHRIST in glory, than they could be amongst us: And comfort yourselves and one another with the thoughts, that though the church and world below suffer great loss, by the greater gain of those, that were useful instruments of GOD's glory, and of their generation's good; yet that he, who is the resurrection and the life to them in heaven, can as easily be the resurrection and the life of his withering,

(*b*) 1 Thess. iv. 17. (*c*) Psal. xvi. 11.
(*d*) 1 Thess. iv. 18.

ing, dying cause on earth. He can quicken dead souls with a divine life to fill up their vacancies here, and can raise up other instruments to do the work that they were engaged in. This brings us to the third proposition.

Prop. III. That it is of great importance to us to believe these things.

Our LORD intimates this in his question to *Martha*, *Believest thou this?* The doctrine of man's mortality can hardly be disbelieved by any of us; daily instances of it all around us will not suffer us to deny it. But yet, alas! how little is it believed, with serious application to ourselves, that we must die! Too many believe it, only as they do things that they have, and desire to have, no concernment in: They assent to it as a truth, but are no more affected with it than if it were all a fable; they believe it at a distance, and put the evil day as far from themselves, as if it would never come, which is next to not believing it at all; and hence they live, as if they never were to die.

But a bare belief of our own mortality is of less moment, than that of a resurrection by JESUS CHRIST to eternal life. If we were to die like the brutes, and there were to be an end of us, it would be hardly worth one's while to be much concerned about dying out of such an uncertain, sinful and calamitous world as this, where disappointments and sorrows, losses and unsocial treatment from without, and our own depraved tempers within, imbitter all its enjoyments. But as we are formed for eternity, and must be inexpressibly and unmixedly happy or miserable in another world for ever, it is of much greater importance to believe that CHRIST is the resurrection and the life, and that whoever believeth in him shall not die the second death, than that we ourselves must die. All our happiness for eternity is concerned in the faith of this; all the efficacy, advantages, and comforts of christian religion depend upon it; and all its

its motives are weak and ineffectual without it. If the dead rise not, the faith and hope of christians are vain; they *are of all men most miserable*; and the *Epicurean* reasoning might be countenanced, *let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die* (*e*).

But, as we carry an immortal part about us, and must exist entire men in another world, it is dreadful to be unacquainted with him, who is the resurrection and the life for that world: And it is of the utmost importance for us to believe that he is so; and above all, to believe this with a reference and application to ourselves, *i. e.* to believe in him, that he may be the resurrection and the life to us, and to realize him by faith, as such, to our own souls; to apply to him, to trust and depend upon him, to commit and yield up ourselves to him, and to act in all things towards him, under the influence of this faith, as those that *look for his mercy to eternal life.*

Without something of this faith, all that we hear and believe of these things for others, will only aggravate our guilt and ruin; but this will make us happy in life and death, and for ever. Oh how unspeakable is the felicity, to be able to say, upon good grounds, with the Apostle, to say it by a faith unfeigned, which has an effectual influence to raise our hope, love and obedience, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day* (*f*). And with *Job, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me* (*g*)!

Reflect. Now to carry on a few reflections upon all this: Let every one think he hears CHRIST saying

(*e*) 1 Cor. xv. 19, 32. (*f*) 2 Tim. i. 12.
(*g*) Job xix. 25—27.

saying to him, as he did to *Martha*, in our text, *Believest thou this?*

He demands thy faith, he inquires after it, and expects thy answer: He puts the question to thee now by the ministry of his word, and, I hope, by some secret suggestions of his Spirit attending it: He has authority to put it to thy conscience; and if thou wilt not seriously consider it, and return an answer now, he will have thine answer another day. Well then, think solemnly with thyself, what thy answer is, or shall be. If thou believest nothing of what thou hast heard from his word, what signifies thy hearing it? What dost thou think will become of thee for ever, if thou art an infidel with respect to his being the resurrection and the life to them that believe in him? Or, if thou hast no faith in him for thine own salvation, and dost not believe this concerning him, with a reference to thine own case? Art thou so mean-spirited as to be willing to die like the brute? If thou art, yet wilt thou not be justly disappointed and condemned to everlasting woe, for refusing CHRIST's testimony relating to eternal life, and the evidence of divine authority that confirms it, by his own resurrection from the dead? Or canst thou have life and blessedness in any other way, than by him? Or rather, must thou not be for ever miserable without remedy?

But I hope better things concerning you, and that there are many among you, that can give such an answer to a question of this sort, as shall lead to more agreeable reflections. Let me suppose this, and assist those reflections upon the three following inquiries.

1. Believest thou that CHRIST is the resurrection and the life; and that whoever believes in him, shall never die the second death?

O think with thyself, What a noble article of my faith is this, beyond all that ever dawned in the light of nature, or in the philosophy of the heathens! What

What a glorious Head and Redeemer has the christian church, who has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel, and will raise his members up to eternal life! What divine and gracious characters mingle in his lovely name! How is he to be reverenced and adored for his greatness and goodness, trusted in as the object of our faith, feared and loved as awfully amiable, and submitted to and served as the LORD of universal subjection and obedience! How much better is an interest in him, than all this world! How concerned should every one be that he may believe in him to life everlasting; that he may be quickned by his Spirit to a life of grace here, in order to a resurrection to an immortal life of glory hereafter! And how should all that profess this faith, love as brethren while they are here, and be comforted with the thoughts of living together with CHRIST, as the children of the resurrection, in a world of perfect harmony and peace above!

2. Believest thou in CHRIST for thyself, that he may be the resurrection and the life to thee?

O happy soul that dost this, with the faith of the operation of GOD! Thou art safe for eternity, and shalt be for ever blessed with him. How thankful shouldst thou be for that rich grace through him, which has made thee alive to GOD in this world, and given thee the best hopes of a resurrection to eternal life in the next! How shouldst thou confide in him with relation to all that concerns his cause and interest, and thy own salvation! How humble, watchful, and diligent shouldst thou be in all manner of holy conversation and godliness! How resolute, unwearied, and courageous, in his strength, for him and his service! How patient amidst the various disappointments, and afflictive scenes of this present life! How contented and yielding to GOD in all that he orders concerning thee! How weaned from this world, and raised in thy thoughts and affections, in thy views and motives, and in thy estimate of happiness,

neſs, above all its little low affairs! How ſpiritual and heavenly-minded! How reconciled to death, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD! How earneſt in thy deſires after it; and how careful to walk with him, and war againſt all ſin at ſuch a rate, as by his grace may every day brighten thy evidences for heaven, and improve thy meetneſs to enjoy it! Let me add one queſtion farther to thoſe of you more particularly, that belong to this church. And it is this:

3. Believeſt thou that the late dear and reverend paſtor of this church of CHRIST lives with him, and ſhall have a reſurrection to eternal life?

I make no doubt but this is a prevailing belief amongſt you all; nor do I know how any, that were intimately acquainted with him, can judge otherwiſe concerning him. I have ſeen his own account, as he himſelf calls it, of his hope concerning the ſtate of his ſoul, which carries plain ſignatures of an effectual work of GOD's grace upon him: And in hopes it may be bleſſed to your inſtruction, and to the encouragement of your faith and holy imitation, I ſhall give you a ſhort view of ſeveral things contained in it, as near as may be in his own words.

He introduces his account with thankfully acknowledging the privilege of his deſcent from godly parents*, who were in covenant with GOD: And goes

* "His father, Mr *Robert Aſty*, was an excellent, humble and "ſerious miniſter of a congregational church at *Norwich*, known "to the world by ſome printed letters of Dr *Owen* and Dr *Goodwin* "to him, and by his valuable poſthumous Sermons. His wife, "Mrs *Lydia Aſty*, I am informed, was a very religious gentlewo-"man, of good parts, and affectionate concern for the ſpiritual "welfare of her children. The grandfather of our Mr *Aſty* was "ejected from *Stratford* in *Suffolk*, by the Act for Uniformity in "the year 1662. He afterwards preached in *Eſſex*, and was a "laborious and ſucceſsful miniſter. His Wife, Mrs *Ellen Aſty*, "was remarkable for early and uncommon piety, with many other "excellent

goes on to speak abundantly of the advantages he received from a religious education, of his early serious impressions, and repeated convictions of sin, and dreadful apprehensions of divine wrath; till at length GOD wrought in him a more clear and abiding sense of his own guilt and vileness, of the corrupt fountain of evil in his heart, of inward spiritual sins, and of the danger of his natural state, which he looked upon as an accursed state under the law. He then was grieved at heart for sin, saw the exceeding sinfulness of it, was filled with self-loathings, and self-humblings, and could not rest under it.

Amidst these strong convictions, and agitations of his soul, he earnestly longed for an interest in CHRIST, as seeing there was no other way of peace, but by his blood and righteousness. He endeavoured to believe, but found it hard work, and under a sense of his own inability for it, was stirred up in earnest prayer to beg faith, and all grace at the hand of GOD, and experienced his drawings. He was brought to resolve to rely on CHRIST, though he could not tell whether his faith were right or no, and to wait to see how GOD would deal with him, thinking in himself, it may be he will be gracious to me. Whatever the event might be, he saw himself under a positive command to believe in CHRIST, and that this was the only way for

" excellent qualities, which were the honor and glory of her pro-
" fession. When her husband laid down his living on the account
" of non-conformity, instead of repining, she said she was glad she
" had such an house and accommodations to leave for CHRIST,
" and with all readiness resigned up all to him. Her father, Mr
" *Bently*, of *Plumsted* in *Norfolk*, was an eminent godly minister;
" and her mother, Mrs *Bently*, a very gracious and holy gentle-
" woman." See Mr *Robert Asty*'s Sermons, published at *Norwich* by Mr *Petto*, 1683; and Mrs *Ellen Asty*'s life, relict of Mr *Asty*, formerly of *Stratford*, and afterwards minister in *Essex*, annexed to her funeral Sermon, preached by Mr *Owen Stockton*, and published after his decease by Mr *Petto*, 1681.

for his salvation; and his heart was very glad that there was such a way: He was encouraged to take this way for himself, from the ground and warrant that the gracious invitations and free promises of the Gospel gave him, from the ability of CHRIST to save, from his gracious offers, from the kindness and compassions that are in his heart towards sinners, from his readiness to save them, from the many instances there have been of his saving grace, and from what he had already done for him, in giving him the dispositions of those that are more peculiarly invited to come to him.

He often mentions the great conflicts there were between his will and sin, his hopes and fears, and what comfort and victory were their issues, when GOD revealed CHRIST to him. He took refuge in the fulness of that redemption which is in CHRIST, and in GOD's design to glorify the riches of his grace in him; and depended on him for sanctification, as well as for righteousness to justification, being equally concerned for both, convinced of the necessity and beauty of holiness, and desirous to glorify GOD in new obedience.

Sometimes he records his concern and fear, lest he should take up with a partial change, and rest in formality and hypocrisy, and should not be found sincere, with his attending resolutions against all sin, his bitter bewailings of its indwellings, his cleaving to GOD with full purpose of heart, and laboring to walk in all holy obedience to him. And at other times he expresses his godly jealousy, lest a slavish fear of hell and judgment, were the only spring of his religion. And this he apprehended could not be cleared up, to prove his sincerity, but by the Spirit of adoption, drawing forth his heart into a more filial fear and love of GOD, which he sometimes found sensibly working within him, and wanted to abound yet more and more.

When at any time he perceived himself to have fallen into sin, his heart worked in a way of deep repentance, humiliation, and shaming himself before God for it, in renewed acts of faith in the blood of Christ, and in great watchfulness afterwards against it. In that way he was favored with the kind, returning intimations of God's love and grace, through Jesus Christ, to his humbled and afflicted spirit: And then his soul was dissolved in sorrow and shame, for his ungrateful offences against God, especially under a consideration of the freeness of his love, and of his dispensations of grace like himself, all great and glorious.

He sometimes lamented the deadness and hardness of his own heart, and the sad hours of darkness, in which he was tempted to call into question all the work of the holy Spirit in him, but still continued waiting upon God. And at other times he was ready to despair under a sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, and under terrifying apprehensions of God's justice, though otherwise he thought he had good reason to hope, that God had chosen and sanctified him, accepted him in Christ, and broke the dominion of sin within him. And he abounded in admiration of the free grace of God, that he should look upon, and have any kind thoughts to, such an ungrateful, unworthy, rebellious creature as himself, and in admiration of the power of divine grace, that had brought him off from the love and practice of sins, which he formerly allowed himself in, and that had stirred him up to resolved endeavours to mortify them.

He records a great number of scriptures, suitable to his case, which God made use of, and frequently expresses his deep sense of the influence of his Spirit, in the whole of the work that had passed upon him. And there one may read his high esteem of the Lord Jesus, of his satisfaction, merit and righteousness;

ouſneſs; his grief ſometimes at his withdrawings, and his delight in, and communion with him at others; his love to GOD, and to his worſhip, ordinances and ſervice, counting them moſt reaſonable and excellent; his perſuaſion of the infallible truth of GOD's word, and of the certainty of a future ſtate; his living under an awful ſenſe of the all-ſeeing eye of GOD, and of his going directly to appear before him; and his longings after heaven, that he might enjoy GOD more fully, might ſee the LORD JESUS in his glory, and be for ever free from all ſin.

And toward the cloſe of that account, he takes notice that, from his own ſenſe of what a horrible, dark, miſerable and dangerous condition unconverted ſinners are in, and yet know it not, he found his heart much drawn out in compaſſion to their ſouls, and thought he could do any thing, and be at any pains, for their converſion and ſalvation; and then adds, bleſſed be GOD, I hope I have alſo great love to the ſaints, to all the followers of the Lamb, the excellent in whom is all my delight.

In this work of grace, and happy turn upon his temper toward the ſaints, and for the ſalvation of others ſouls, the beſt foundation was laid for a faithful diſcharge of the miniſtry he received of the LORD JESUS: And his good natural parts, and conſiderable attainments in human literature, and ſpiritual gifts, together with theſe, were a rich furniture for his miniſterial province, and made him *a workman that needed not to be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (*h*). He was willing to ſpend, and be ſpent in the ſervice of CHRIST and of ſouls. You, of this church, are his witneſſes that GOD was with him; and, I truſt, many of you are the ſeals of his miniſtry, and will be *his joy, and crown of rejoicing in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt at his coming* (*i*).

(*h*) 2 Tim. ii. 15. (*i*) 1 Theſſ. ii. 19.

It has been with great pleasure, and, I hope, advantage, that God favored me with some opportunities of attending upon his public ministrations: And, as far as I could observe, and was able to judge, they were very serious, evangelical, experimental, solid, and judicious. They principally turned upon the most useful and important points of faith and practice; and were well adapted, by the blessing of God, to inform the judgment, to come close to the conscience, to warm the heart, and regulate the life. The great Doctor *Owen* was his favorite author, and one might easily perceive, that he had drank very much into his sentiments and spirit. He had a fervent zeal for the glory of Christ, together with that of the Father and holy Spirit, and for every doctrine, that he apprehended to be according to godliness. In that zeal he could not but, as occasions offered, contend earnestly for the faith, which he had built his own hopes of salvation upon, and which he believed was once delivered to the saints: And yet, in my freest converses with him, I have with pleasure observed a remarkable tenderness in his spirit, as to judging the states of those that differed from him, even in points which he took to be of very great importance. His conversation had an agreeable mixture of the pleasant and the serious; and you, of this church, *were witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably*, abating human infirmities, *he behaved himself among you that believe; as you know how he exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory* (*k*).

And by what I have learned from among yourselves, who had the best opportunities of knowing him thoroughly, I persuade myself you cannot soon forget, and must jointly bless his memory when you recollect,

(*k*) 1 Thess. ii. 10—12.

recollect, with what prudence, gravity, and ſweetneſs of ſpirit, he walked before you, and preſided over you in the LORD; how meek and humble he was among you; how earneſt in his prayers, and how cautious in his admonitions; and yet, with what authority he would ſometimes rebuke in the name of the LORD JESUS; how apt he was to diſallow of, and acknowledge any miſtakes in himſelf, as well as others, if at any time, through a quickneſs of temper or inadvertency, common to the preſent frailty of human nature, he had ſlipt into them; yea, how diſpoſed to caſt a mantle over the failings of others, that were grievous to him, and to aſk pardon for his own; how familiar and condeſcending he was to ſuch as were of the loweſt degree; how tender and compaſſionate, charitable and forbearing in his temper and conduct toward the weak, and how he glorified GOD on the behalf of them that were ſtrong; how affectionately deſirous he was of you all, making your ſorrows and your joys his own; how feelingly he ſympathized with the afflicted; how greatly he rejoiced in the proſperity of every one, eſpecially when their ſouls proſpered; and how ready he was to do all that in him lay, for your help and comfort. In a word, you *fully knew his doctrine, manner of life, purpoſe, faith, long-ſuffering, charity, and patience* (*l*); how he *behaved himſelf in the church of God*; how he *ſerved the Lord with all humility of mind*; how he *kept back nothing that was profitable to you, and did not ſhun to declare unto you all the counſel of God* (*m*).

And though, by the nature of the illneſs that carried him off, GOD in his awful ſovereignty weakned his capacities of giving ſuch noble dying teſtimonies to the honor of his name, as otherwiſe might have been hoped for; yet, by what I obſerved, and have heard from others, he was not a ſtranger to divine

(*l*) 2 Tim. iii. 10. (*m*) Acts xx. 19, 20, 27.

supports and consolations then; and the grace of GOD so far shone through all the enfeebling influence of distemper, that he behaved with exemplary composure and solemnity of spirit, with great humbleness of mind, and with a calm resignation to the will of GOD. He was not insensible of the hand of GOD upon him, or of his own weakness, and want of help from above; and while he found himself incapable of his Master's work, his heart continued in it, and cheerfully waited to see what the LORD would do with him.

Now, after all that you have seen, and the little you have been hearing of him, I dare say your answer will be in the affirmative to the question, *Believe ye that he is gone to Christ, and shall appear with him at last, who is the resurrection and the life?* O! then, let the next thought be, and whither shall I go when I come to die? Shall it be to CHRIST and him, or to a state of eternal separation from them? Let me be a follower of him, so far as he was of CHRIST, as ever I would hope to follow him to glory.

And why should you, on this melancholy occasion, *sorrow as others that have no hope?* Weep not for him, but for yourselves. Think how much happier he is, than when he was here; and rejoice that he is gone to CHRIST, and to the Father; that, having done his LORD's work, he is gone to receive his gracious reward; that, having finished his labors with you, he is gone to rest in the bosom of his Savior; that, having lived as long as the incapacitating circumstances of his case would admit of saying, *for me to live is Christ*, he died, that CHRIST might be his gain; and that from a sleep, that moved all your compassions, grief, and fears in this world, he is fallen asleep in JESUS, among those whom GOD will bring with him to the glorious world on high. Why then should you not rather weep for yourselves, than

than for him? Weep that you are ſtill left behind, in an apoſtate world, to ſtruggle and to preſs through temptation, ſin, and ſorrows, and death, whilſt he is got beyond their reach within the veil; that you have loſt the helper of your faith and joy; and that GOD hath purſued a controverſy with you, firſt, in laying him aſide by diſtemper, and now, in removing him by death.

It is now your turn for ſolemn reflections on this awful rebuke, which ought to be awakened in all churches, whenever the like comes upon them. Though I know nothing to charge you with in particular, more than others; yet this is a proper ſeaſon for every one of you ſeriouſly to think, whether you have nothing to charge upon yourſelves? And whether there may not be a cauſe among you, wherefore GOD ſhould thus ſorely contend with you? Let each one therefore turn inwards, and lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, What have I done to provoke the LORD to this? And let this ſeaſon of your tenderneſs and grief be improved to lament, and ſeek recovery from, your own unprofitableneſs, or other ſins, under the bleſſed means of grace you have been favored with, that may have contributed to it. In this manner *humble yourſelves under this mighty hand of God*, who has promiſed to ſuch, that *he will exalt them in due time* (*n*).

But in the midſt of all your mournful reflections, intermix the joys of all the good hope of glory, to which GOD has begotten, or aſſiſted you by his miniſtry. And remember that the great Shepherd of the ſheep ſtill lives, and is able to revive his work, and to raiſe up another paſtor after his own heart, inſtead of him that now reſts from his labors, who ſhall feed you with knowledge and underſtanding, for the furtherance of your faith and obedience, hope, love, and joy. Be earneſt, frequent, and

(*n*) 1 Pet. v. 6.

united in your supplications to the great LORD of the harvest for it: Take heed of all divisions, misunderstandings, pride, self-seeking, low and party-views, rash and unbrotherly temper and conduct, that would blast your prayers: And *let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you*; that ye may *not grieve the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption* (o).

(o) Eph. iv. 30–32.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

To live is CHRIST, and to die is Gain.

Occaſioned by the much lamented Death of the Reverend and Learned Mr *John Hubbard*, who departed this Life *July* 13, 1743, in the Fifty-firſt Year of his Age. Preached at *Stepney*, *July* 24.

PHIL. I. 21.

For to me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.

I Need not tell you what the awful providence is, that leads our thoughts to theſe words; the ſorrows of many of your hearts, and the ſolemn countenance of this crowded aſſembly, are beforehand with me in appriſing you of it. My buſineſs is, by divine aſſiſtance, humbly to attempt an improvement of them to ſuch happy purpoſes, as may enable each of us to adopt them for our own uſe, according to the reſpective ſtations, in which the providence of GOD has placed us: For it will be of little avail to any of us to hear of others, to whom they belong, unleſs we can apply them upon good grounds, and with a right ſpirit, to ourſelves.

They

They are the words of the great Apostle *Paul* concerning himself; and the particle *for*, with which he introduces them, shews, that they refer back to something, that he had been saying before. If we confine the reference to that part of the immediately preceding verse, in which he speaks of *his earnest expectation and hope,—that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it be by life, or by death*, they assign the reason of that hope, which was, as some render the words, that *Christ was his gain, in living and dying* (Ἐμοὶ τὸ ζῆν, Χριστὸς· καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, κέρδος). The promoting of his interest and glory, was the great advantage which the Apostle aimed at in both, and was well assured would be answered, through the blessing of God, by his faith, preaching, and conversation while he lived; and by the honorable testimony he should bear to Christ, when he came to die; especially if, in consequence of his then present bonds, he were to seal his testimony with his blood. Christ was his All in life and death; upon him he depended for grace, and from him he derived it, to enable him to pursue his great design of glorifying him, both living and dying, and of gaining over souls to him, whether he himself should continue long in this world, or soon die a martyr out of it. Christ, in every view, was his chief gain: And his heart was so full of him, that it overflowed in a torrent of expressions, wherein he mentions him, under this very title, near twenty times in this short chapter.

But if we take a wider scope for the reference in our text, and carry it a little farther backward, to what the Apostle had said, in the three foregoing verses, about his *rejoicing, that Christ was preached, whether in pretence, or in truth*; *and his knowing, that this should turn to his salvation, according to his earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing he should be ashamed*, &c. Then we may take these words, according to our translation of them, as giving the reason of all this:

this: *For to him to live was Christ*, whom they preached; *and to die was gain*, unto the obtaining of the salvation which he hoped for; and, on these accounts, it was an equal matter to him, whether *Christ should be magnified in his body, by life, or by death.* And I am the more inclined to consider the connection in this extensive view, or at least to take in a gain to the Apostle himself at death, as well as to the honor and service of CHRIST; because in the two next verses, which seem to be an explication of his sentiments in this, he intimates that, if he were to *live in the flesh*, his serving and honoring CHRIST, would be *the fruit of his labor*, even all that he thought worth living for: But if he were *to depart*, it would be to go to CHRIST, which was *far better* for himself, than to abide in the body; and this threw him into *a strait what to choose*, ver. 22, 23. I shall therefore principally keep my eye upon this sense of the latter part of the text, the former being the same in both ways of rendering it.

The account, which the Apostle here gives of himself, relates immediately to his public ministerial character, but holds good, with regard to his character, as a christian, or true believer; yea, it evidently comprehends this, as necessary unto a happy discharge of the duties of that: And therefore, tho' the present occasion requires a peculiar attention to the first of these; yet, as the other is so essential to it, and may be most profitably considered together with it, we shall include both; and so look upon the words, as descriptive of true believers, and faithful ministers. *First* in their lives, *To them to live is Christ*; and *secondly* in their death, *To them to die is gain.* Let us begin with considering,

First, The description given in our text of true believers, and faithful ministers in their lives, *To them to live is Christ.*

He is the great end and scope of their living, that they may serve and glorify him: And though Gospel ministers

miniſters and private chriſtians are called to ſome different ways of honoring their great LORD and Redeemer, and of advancing his cauſe and intereſt in the world; yet they are all concerned, and in one form or other engaged, according to their ſeveral ſtations, in this great and noble deſign. Some of their ways of purſuing it are common to both, whilſt others are peculiar to them that officiate in ſacred things: This will appear in the proceſs of the diſcourſe; in which I ſhall draw out the account that our text gives of them in their lives, under the three following heads. And here I would obſerve, that,

I. It is the undoubted duty of true believers, and faithful miniſters, to live to CHRIST.

Their reſpective characters and profeſſions ſuppoſe this; their obligations to it are indiſpenſible; they are perſuaded of it in their own minds, and their principles bind it upon their conſciences: And what may be offered in ſhewing, that this is their duty, will, at the ſame time inform us, wherein *to them to live is Chriſt.* Proceed we then to take ſome notice of it.

1. As it concerns miniſters and believers in common.

The glory of CHRIST, and of GOD in him, which muſt be all along ſuppoſed, as included in living to him, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (*p*), ought to be the main view of their lives. All their civil, moral, and religious acts ſhould, one way or other, point and tend towards it, and ultimately center and iſſue in it; that *whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, all may be done to the glory of God; and in the name of the Lord Jeſus* (*q*). This ſhould lie uppermoſt on their hearts, and govern the courſe of their behaviour: For GOD's great deſign in the Goſpel is, to exalt himſelf in his Son, and his Son

(*p*) John xiv. 13.
(*q*) 1 Cor. x. 31. and Col iii. 17.

Son together with himſelf; *that all men may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father* (*r*).

And as all right living to CHRIST, and honoring him, begins in the heart, I would, in ſetting out this duty, begin with ſuggeſting, how that ought to be engaged in it.—We ſhould have high and exalted thoughts of CHRIST, of his perſon and offices; of what he is in himſelf, as the glorious God-man, and of what he has done and ſuffered on earth, for bringing in an everlaſting righteouſneſs, and taking away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf; of what he is now doing in heaven, as our great high-prieſt and advocate at the Father's right hand, and as head over all things to the church; and of what he will do, in judging the world at the laſt day. Under theſe, and ſuch like apprehenſions of him, we ſhould honor him, by placing all our dependence on him, as a neceſſary, ſuitable, and all-ſufficient Savior; and as the only ground and medium of all our hope toward GOD, and acceptance with him, and of our deriving all grace and ſtrength from him, that is needful to animate and aſſiſt us in his way and work, whereby we may *glorify him in our bodies and ſpirits, which are his* (*s*): And we ſhould truſt entirely, and alone, on the great Mediator, and on the free grace of GOD in him, for all ſalvation, as knowing, that *grace reigns through righteouſneſs to eternal life, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord* (*t*); and that *we are ſaved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourſelves; it is the gift of God* (*u*). To join any thing of our own with CHRIST, and the rich grace of GOD in him, as the ground of our expectation of ſaving bleſſings, is to detract from their glory; it is to take honor to ourſelves, and to boaſt in ourſelves, inſtead of glorying only in the LORD; and ſo is directly contrary to our duty, and to the whole ſcheme of the goſpel, as the Apoſtle ſummarily repreſents it, when, in oppoſition

(*r*) John v. 23. (*s*) 1 Cor. vi. 20.
(*t*) Rom. v. 21. (*u*) Eph. ii. 8.

oppoſition to *glorying in God's preſence*, he ſays, *But of him are ye in Chriſt Jeſus, who of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord* (*x*). We cannot honor CHRIST in our hearts better, than when we can ſay with the Apoſtle, *The life we now live in the fleſh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us* (*y*).

And as *faith works by love* (*z*), and *Chriſt is precious to them that believe*, and they *that love him who begat, love them alſo that are begotten of him* (*a*): So, as ever we would live to his honor, our hearts ſhould glow with the moſt ſincere and ardent affection to him, to his truths and ways, to all that bear his image, and belong to him; and ſhould be daily renewing free, ſolemn and unreſerved ſurrenders of our whole ſelves up to him, and to the Father thro' him, by the aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit. We ſhould likewiſe be zealouſly concerned for his glory; for the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of his Goſpel, which reflect a peculiar honor upon him; and for vital, practical godlineſs, in all holy communion with him, and in an unfeigned, impartial and univerſal obedience to his commands.

As in this manner we ſhould glorify CHRIST in our hearts; ſo we ſhould give all poſſible evidence of it, in a holy and regular profeſſion of his name, according to his own inſtitutions and appointments; we ſhould hereby ſhew to all around us, that we are not aſhamed of him, or of his Goſpel and ways; but that we glory in him, as our head and Savior, our prophet, prieſt and king, our life and ſtrength, and the LORD our righteouſneſs; and as our all in all.

And correſpondent to this holy profeſſion of him, we ſhould lay out ourſelves, in our reſpective places and ſtations, to ſpread his divine and mediatorial glories;

(*x*) 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. (*y*) Gal. ii. 20.
(*z*) Gal. v. 6. (*a*) 1 Pet. ii. 7. and 1 John v. 1.

glories; to recommend him to others, to our families, friends, and acquaintance, by ſpeaking of him and for him, as opportunities and occaſions offer; and by exemplifying the reality and efficacy of Goſpel-principles, and of the grace of God, which attends and owns them, in the humility, integrity, and benevolence of our temper and behaviour, and in all the beauties of a ſpiritual and heavenly, juſt and ſober, and every way fruitful converſation, ſuch as becomes the Goſpel of Christ. We ſhould likewiſe improve our temporal ſubſtance, our ſtrength of body and mind, and all our influence in the world, to ſupport and propagate the kingdom and glory of the dear Redeemer, and to gain over ſouls to him. And when any attempts are made to degrade his perſon, to ſet aſide, or depreciate his atonement, and the operations of his Spirit, or to pervert any important article of his Goſpel, and obſtruct the progreſs of his cauſe and intereſt. We ſhould *earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the ſaints*; and *ſtand faſt in one Spirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the Goſpel, in nothing terrified by our adverſaries* (*b*). But, at the ſame time, we ſhould take heed of indulging to an intemperate heat, as knowing, that *the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God* (*c*); and inſtead of cenſuring and condemning perſons, together with their principles, we are *in meekneſs to inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth* (*d*). And in matters of leſs moment, that are well conſiſtent with holding Christ, the head, we ſhould even agree to differ, without any breach of brotherly affection, and leave our fellow chriſtians to God, till he may *reveal ſuch things to them*; that *as far as we have already attained*, we may *walk by the ſame rule, and mind the ſame things* (*e*); and ſo may *walk worthy of the vocation, where-*

(*b*) Jude 3. and Phil. i. 27, 28.
(*c*) Jam. i. 20.
(*d*) 2 Tim. ii. 25.
(*e*) Phil. iii. 15, 16.

wherewith we are called, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (*f*). This, you ſee, by what is here ſaid, is to the honor of our high vocation, and of him that has called us; and therefore we ſhould love, and treat all thoſe, as brethren, whom we have ground to believe, in the judgment of charity, *Chriſt has received to the glory of God* (*g*).

In theſe ways both miniſters and people, in their different ſtations, ſhould endeavour to honor CHRIST, and to promote his cauſe and intereſt in the world, by living to him. To this noble end, all our thoughts, words and actions, ſhould be directed in their ultimate view: For, to this end, GOD hath choſen, redeemed, and called us. *He choſe us in Chriſt before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy, and without blame before him in love,—to the praiſe of the glory of his grace* (*h*). CHRIST alſo *gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works* (*i*). And *ye are a choſen generation,* ſays the Apoſtle *Peter, a royal prieſthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye ſhould ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who hath called you out of darkneſs into his marvellous light* (*k*). But we may conſider this,

2. As it concerns miniſters more particularly.

They are not only to live to CHRIST, by making his intereſt and glory their great end, in common with other chriſtians; but are to give themſelves wholly to this ſervice, and to employ their ſtrength and time, their gifts and graces, their natural and acquired talents, in what moſt immediately relates to it. The advancement of his kingdom and honor, of the knowledge of him, and ſubjection to him, in all his characters, ſhould be the principal aim and end

(*f*) Eph. iv 1, 2, 3.
(*g*) Rom. xv. 7.
(*h*) Eph. i. 4, 6.
(*i*) Tit. ii. 14.
(*k*) 1 Pet. ii. 9.

end of their preaching, and of all their holy miniſtrations. *For we preach not ourſelves*, ſays the Apoſtle, *but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake* (*l*): And their work is uſually deſcribed by preaching CHRIST.

They ſhould willingly ſpend and be ſpent for him, and for the good of precious ſouls, to win them over to him: They ſhould grudge no pains in the ſtudy, in the pulpit, in church-aſſemblies, or in converſation, for explaining, ſupporting, defending, and inculcating the doctrines, and the laws of his kingdom: And they ſhould ſet about, and go on with diligence and perſeverance in all this, and with an humble dependence on his grace to direct and aſſiſt, own and ſucceed them in promoting the truth as it is in JESUS, and in enforcing it with all arguments taken from his authority and love. They are to conſider themſelves, as *miniſters of Chriſt*, and *laborers in his vineyard*; as *ſtewards of the myſteries* (*m*), and *of the manifold grace of God* (*n*), who *requires that they be faithful* (*o*); as *ſet for the defence of the Goſpel*; and *as examples to the flock* (*p*): And therefore, by all proper ways and means, they are to honor him, who hath ſent them, and to ſhew *whoſe they are, and whom they ſerve.* As they derive their commiſſion, and their All, from CHRIST; they ſhould faithfully and laboriouſly improve all for him; that, through the attending power of his Spirit, he may be glorified in the converſion of ſinners, and edification of the ſaints in faith, comfort, and holineſs, to compleat ſalvation. They ſhould lay themſelves out for him, that his name may be exalted; that the plaineſt traces of his doctrine and image may *be formed* (*q*) in their hearts, and that they may be the living *epiſtle of Chriſt, known and read of all men* (*r*).

(*l*) 2 Cor. iv. 5.
(*n*) 1 Pet. iv. 10.
(*p*) 1 Pet. v. 3.
(*r*) 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.
(*m*) 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.
(*o*) Phil. i. 17.
(*q*) Gal. iv. 19.

And whatever contempt and oppoſition the ſervants of CHRIST may meet with, or whatever they may ſuffer for eſpouſing his cauſe, and preaching his uncorrupted Goſpel, according to the beſt of their light; they ſhould be faithful, reſolute and courageous, in ſpeaking, acting and ſuffering for him, as thoſe that *are not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt*; *becauſe it is the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believes* (*s*).

Thus, it is the undoubted duty of both private chriſtians, and Goſpel miniſters, to honor CHRIST in their lives. And they that are in truth, what they profeſs to be, under either of theſe characters, muſt believe, and own it to be ſo. Hence,

II. It is the ſincere deſire and aim of every true believer, and faithful miniſter, to live to CHRIST.

His glory lies near their hearts: It is their grief, that they can advance it no more; and it is their ſerious deſire and concern, prayer and endeavour, to be more active, eminent and ſucceſsful, in promoting it. Hence the Apoſtle ſays, 2 *Cor.* v. 14, 15. *The love of Chriſt conſtrains us*; *becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead*; *and that he died for all, that they which live ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him, which died for them, and roſe again.* It is now their great and governing end, that, inſtead of living to themſelves, as they were formerly wont to do, they may live to him, who died for their ſins, and roſe again for their juſtification; that, inſtead of ſeeking to promote their own ſecular intereſts, honor and pleaſure in the world, they may ſeek the intereſt and honor of CHRIST, and the things that pleaſe him. This is the effect of that happy change, which grace has made upon them, whether they be miniſters, or only private chriſtians, and therefore the Apoſtle adds, *ver.* 17. *If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature*; *old things are paſſed away, behold, all things are become new.*

(*s*) Rom. i. 16.

new. His principles, desires and designs, among other things, are renewed; they are set right, and give the soul a strong bias toward the glory of CHRIST, and of GOD in him.

This is the very spirit and genius of a true believer, and Gospel minister: He longs for nothing, and aims at nothing more, than that CHRIST may be exalted, in all that he undertakes and doth; or, as the Apostle expresses it, in the verse before our text, that *Christ may be magnified in his body, whether it be by life, or by death.* And he that prefers his own reputation and interest to CHRIST's, and, in the general course of his life, seeks to promote his own, in opposition to, or in a wilful neglect of CHRIST's, can be no true believer, or faithful minister of the Gospel. For where there is a principle of grace derived from him, it will naturally carry the happy subjects of it upward to him, that they may shew forth his praise. Hence,

III. Living to CHRIST, is in some prevailing degree, their daily exercise and practice.

Their desires and designs for him are such active and powerful tendencies, and workings in the heart, as influence the conduct; and produce some genuine fruits to his glory; though, alas! not so much, as they themselves could earnestly wish. They have not only a principle, but some exercises of faith in CHRIST, and of love to him and his Gospel, people and ways, and some zeal for his glory: They make humble surrenders of their whole *selves to the Lord* (*t*); and live in an habitual and determined devotedness of soul to him: They endeavour, by his grace, to fill up all the duties of their civil and religious stations and relations, with diligence and fidelity, as may be most for the honor of his name; and they have such a conscientious respect to all his commands, that they dare not allow themselves in the commission

(*t*) 2 Cor. viii. 5.

of any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty, on any consideration whatsoever.

They follow him in his ways, and sometimes find them to be ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace to their own souls, and can recommend them, upon experience, to others: They side with him, and take his part, against his enemies; and are ready to do what in them lies, according to their capacities and opportunities, to subserve his cause and interest in the world: And they are humble and importunate petitioners at the throne of grace, that his name and kingdom may be highly exalted, and spread through the earth.

In a word, their spirit, conversation, way and walk, shine forth in the beauties of holiness, under one form or another; and the prevailing bias and course of their living, is not to themselves, but to their once crucified, and now exalted Redeemer. Hence the Apostle, speaking of private christians, as well as ministers, says, *None of us liveth to himself, and no Man dieth to himself: For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's: For, to this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living* (*u*). Thus, you see how things stand with true believers, and faithful ministers, in their lives: It is their undoubted and acknowledged duty; and is become their sincere desire and aim, and, in some good degree, their daily exercise and practice, *to live to* CHRIST. This leads us to the other branch of our text, which is,

Secondly, The description given of true believers, and faithful ministers, in their death. *To them to die is gain.*

When a servant of CHRIST, or other child of GOD, lies upon a sick and dying bed, full of faith and hope, patience

(*u*) Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

patience and resignation, weanedness from this world, and aspirations after heaven and glory; and when they that stand around him, see his lovely deportment; and hear him speaking joyfully and honorably of CHRIST, as knowing whom he has believed, and recommending him, upon present and former experience, to his friends and relations; and when, at last, they see him yielding up his departing soul into the hands of the LORD JESUS, with all composure and humble confidence, or with triumphant ecstasy and assurance, on the foot of his righteousness, and the sovereign grace of GOD in him, what a revenue of glory doth such a death bring to CHRIST! How inviting is it to others, to taste and see that the LORD is good! And how encouraging and establishing to all that believe in him! This is a testimony, which every one of his saints and servants would gladly bear to the honor of our blessed LORD, in their dying moments.

But whether their desire be answered, at a higher or lower rate, in this sort of gain for CHRIST, as well as for the present comfort of their own souls, in this world, we may be very sure, that all those, to whom to live has been CHRIST, shall find, that death is their own highest gain, in the world to come. It is, to them, the gate of heaven, and a short, very short passage, and quick dispatch to the mansions of eternal rest and glory: It is a coronation-day to them, who are made kings and priests to GOD and our Father: And it advances them to that state, and those dignities and delights, which they most of all long for the enjoyment of. Thus our Apostle accounted of it, when he spoke of his *desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better* than any state can be here in the body; and so every believer thinks of it too, when his faith is in lively exercise, and realizes the glory and blessedness of that state, to which death will transmit him. Then his lan-

guage is, as in 2 *Cor.* v. 1, 2, 8. *We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: For in this*, that is, in this tabernacle, *we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.—We are confident*, I say, *and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

The gain of a gracious soul, and servant of CHRIST, by death, is too great to be rated by our narrow minds, while they are shut up in these dark houses of clay; and the instances of it are too numerous, to be computed in the scanty limits of time; much less can a few minutes discourse give you any proportionate detail of them. No capacity, inferior to the spirits of the just made perfect, can apprehend, and fully estimate the immense riches of that gain; and eternity itself is not more than enough to tell over its vast and endless variety. However, I shall attempt to give you a summary view of it, under the two heads of deliverances, and of possessions or enjoyments. These our Apostle seems to have had in his eye, and leads our thoughts to, in the next verse but one, after our text, where he speaks of his *desire to depart* from this world, and from the body of flesh and sin, and all the miseries that attend them; and *to be with Christ*, in possession of all the blessings and delights of his immediate presence. I say then,

I. All the faithful servants of CHRIST, and true believers gain, by their death, a compleat deliverance from every evil, which they feel or fear.

When their souls depart from the body, they leave a world of sin and sorrow behind them, and get to the remotest distance from every kind of evil.

Death, which dissolves the union of their souls and bodies, dissolves their union with every trouble, that here at any time cleaves to them; when it shakes

ſhakes down theſe tottering earthly tabernacles, it ſhakes off every clog and burden, that annoys us in them; and theſe mortal bodies themſelves, that are laid down in all their weakneſs and corruption, ſhall be rebuilt, and reaſſumed, at the reſurrection of the juſt, with vigorous immortality, and exceeding glory, as the Apoſtle repreſents at large in 1 *Cor.* xv. 42, *&c.*

While we are here, we are perplexed on every ſide: Sin, darkneſs, fear, and many diſorderly paſſions ſpring up in the ſoul, and ſickneſs, wearineſs and pain in the body, within; and temptations, diſappointments, loſſes and dangers, ſome of them common to all mankind, and others peculiar to the people and ſervants of GOD, for the Goſpel's ſake, ſurround us without: So that, if *in this life only we had hope in Chriſt, we ſhould be of all men moſt miſerable* (*x*). But death will put an end to all theſe, and every other evil, that can be imagined, and ſet us beyond their reach, if we are ſincere believers: We ſhall then gain a compleat and everlaſting deliverance from them all. That ſtroke, which flings down this corrupt and brittle frame, will bring all deſtruction to a perpetual end; and all our enemies, that inſult us in life, will, like thoſe of *Sampſon*, be buried in the ruins of our death, and never be able to riſe up againſt us more.

Sin, that worſt of enemies ſhall never more aſſault us, or work deceitfully in us: It ſhall never defile our conſciences, or fill them with guilt again: It ſhall never hinder, cramp and fetter us in the ſervice of GOD, and in our communion with him; nor ſpoil the pleaſure and ſpirituality of our holy duties: It ſhall never ſeparate between his ſmiling face and our ſouls; nor hide any good thing from us: It ſhall never awaken one fear, or occaſion one doubt more: It ſhall never make us ſtumble and

(*x*) 1 Cor. xv. 19.

fall, to the dishonor of CHRIST, and the triumph of his and our enemies, or to the offence and grief of his good Spirit, or of his people, and to the wounding of our own souls. No, it shall have no remainder of indwelling with us, or of bad effects upon us: But as soon as these houses of clay shall be pulled down, this body of sin, root and branch, shall be thoroughly purged out, and die with them; and we shall be *presented faultless, before the presence of our Lord's glory, with exceeding joy* (*y*).

All darkness shall be removed, together with our sins; what we know not now, will then be revealed in numberless instances; and what we know in part, shall then be as perfectly understood, as can be, by our finite created minds. All mistakes and errors will then be rectified; *in God's light we shall see light; and shall know, even as we are known* (*z*).—All fears shall be for ever banished from us: Our fears of offending GOD, and apostatizing from the faith, hope, and holiness of the Gospel; our fears of falling short of heaven, and falling into hell; and our fears of any sort of evil, relating to soul or body, which here at any time distress us, shall trouble us no more; but they shall all end in *peace, quietness, and assurance for ever* (*a*).—All our inward vexations, and uneasy tempers, shall be perfectly cured: Those teazing and tormenting passions, that now fret us, boil and swell within us, and make us a burden to ourselves, shall never give us one moment's discomposure again; all the faults of our natural temper shall be corrected, and a serene, calm, and unruffled disposition of mind shall possess us for ever: We shall then, in the most perfect manner imaginable, *be sanctified wholly in spirit, and soul, and body, and be* every way *blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* (*b*).

Satan

(*y*) Jude 24. (*z*) Psal. xxxvi. 9. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
(*a*) Isai. xxxii. 17. (*b*) 1 Thess. v. 23.

Satan shall never more annoy us with his troublesome suggestions, and fiery darts: But *the God of peace will bruise him under our feet* (*c*).—Disappointments and losses of any kind shall never more befal us; nor shall sickness, grief, or pain, in living or dying, ever afflict us again: For *God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things will be passed away* (*d*). —Persecutions and dangers, defamation and oppression, shall cease for ever, nor shall friends or enemies, in any shape or circumstance, be occasions of the least trouble or uneasiness to us. And the most important, crowning, and all-comprehensive deliverance is, that we shall never feel one drop of the dreadful *wrath to come.* Then, in the highest and strongest sense, *the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to* the heavenly *Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away* (*e*). This leads me to add, that,

II. Christ's faithful servants, and true believers gain, by death, a possession or enjoyment of all that is desirable, great, and glorious.

Whatever accession of glory and blessedness they may receive, when their souls and bodies shall be reunited, at the general resurrection, it is all in consequence of, and entailed upon, that state, into which they enter at death; and even then their souls have an immediate admission into the glorious presence of Christ; otherwise there would be no room for the Apostle's strait, betwixt a desire of living to him here, and of being with him in the better world: For were not an enjoyment of this high privilege, to commence immediately after death, but to be deferred to the general resurrection, he would not have been

(*c*) Rom. xvi. 20.
(*d*) Rev. xxi. 4.
(*e*) Isai. xxxv. 10.

been one moment the ſooner with CHRIST, in heaven, in caſe he had died that very day, than if he had lived a thouſand years longer upon earth; and, conſequently, no thoughts of preſent dying, in order to his being with CHRIST, could have had any weight againſt his deſire of continuing here, to live to him. But no ſooner are the ſouls of believers *abſent from the* body, than *preſent with the Lord* (*f*): They are *that* very *day with him in paradiſe* (*g*), as was the ſoul of the penitent thief, when expiring on the Croſs: And the ſum and perfection of all heavenly happineſs to the ſaints, even after their whole perſons ſhall be inſtated in it, is deſcribed by this, *ſo ſhall we ever be with the Lord* (*h*).

All the bleſſedneſs and glory of heaven itſelf, is indeed already theirs, in right and title; and they have ſome ſweet earneſts, beginnings, and foretaſtes of it, even now: *For he that believes on the Son hath everlaſting life* (*i*). But they are far from a compleat enjoyment of it. This they are looking, longing, and hoping for, and panting after: And this they ſhall certainly gain, to the utmoſt of their wiſhes, when they come to die. Then all that GOD has promiſed, or they can hope for; all that is neceſſary to perfect their happineſs, and fill up their largeſt capacities and deſires, in their ſeparate ſtate, ſhall be given them, to their entire and endleſs ſatisfaction: For *in his preſence is fulneſs of joy*; *at his right hand are pleaſures for evermore* (*k*).

Their underſtandings ſhall be enlarged, and entertained with the ſublimeſt viſions: *Bleſſed are the pure in heart*; *for they ſhall ſee God* (*l*): *With him is the fountain of life*; *and in his light, they ſhall ſee light* (*m*). Their wills and affections ſhall move with

(*f*) 2 Cor. v. 8.
(*g*) Luke xxiii. 43.
(*h*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 17.
(*i*) John iii 36.
(*k*) Pſal. xvi. 11.
(*l*) Matt. v. 8.
(*m*) Pſal. xxxvi 9.

with perfect regularity, in a due subjection to GOD, and to the plainest direction of their own irradiated minds; and shall be entirely satiated with supreme goodness itself. Their whole souls will be at rest on their proper center, and transporting joys will spread through all their powers and faculties, in clear, affectionate and beatific views, of the ever blessed GOD, and of all divine perfections, as they shine out in the person and mediation of JESUS CHRIST: For *now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face* (*n*). And *Father, I will*, says our dear LORD, *that they, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory* (*o*). Every display of this divine and excellent glory before them, will reflect a resembling glory, as impressing his illustrious image, in its strongest and brightest lines, upon them. *They shall behold God's face in righteousness, and be satisfied, when they awake with his likeness* (*p*): And *when Christ shall appear, they shall be like him; for they shall see him as he is* (*q*).

Their residence will be in the heavenly mansions, *in that city, which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God* (*r*); where all light and love, holiness and joy, shall reign and flourish for ever. Their agreeable and harmonious associates, will be no less than *an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect* (*s*); and their delightful employment will be, to join with them in everlasting hallelujahs. *I beheld*, says the Apostle *John, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts*, or rather living creatures, *and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*; and again, *Blessing, and honor,*

(*n*) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.
(*o*) John xvii. 24.
(*p*) Psal. xv. 17.
(*q*) 1 John iii. 2.
(*r*) Heb. xi. 10.
(*s*) Ibid. xii. 22, 23.

honor, and glory, and power, be unto him, that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever (*t*). And the crowning felicity of all, which makes heaven, and its inhabitants what they are for glory and delight, lies in this, that *he who sits on the throne, shall dwell among them*; *and the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters* (*u*). Who can conceive the immense happiness of this state! *Blessed are they that dwell in God's house* on high; *they are ever praising him.* Who can make an equal estimate of that gain, which the faithful servants of CHRIST, and all true believers reap, by their death! — Each of these heads would admit of many discourses to illustrate them; and after all, when we come to see them in the upper world, we shall say, with admiration, as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon*'s glory, *the half of them was not told us* (*x*). But I must leave the brief hints that have been suggested, to the enlargement of your own thoughts upon them; and close with two or three practical remarks.

Inferences. We may infer,

1. That the saints, and faithful servants of CHRIST, are vastly different from others, in life and death.

There is a wide difference between them in life. CHRIST is the end of the believer's life, both in public and private character: He lives to him; he gives him the glory of all his salvation, rests entirely upon him, and his righteousness for it, and shews forth his praise in a holy conversation; and when he has done all, he says, *he is an unprofitable servant*, and grieves that he can do no more for his great LORD and dear Redeemer. But the unbeliever, whether minister or private person, lives to himself; seeks his own honor, pleasure, or secular interest, makes them his highest end, and thinks himself no further happy, than as he obtains them. And if he has any concern

(*t*) Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. (*u*) Ibid. vii. 15, 17.
(*x*) 1 Kings x. 7.

concern about religion, he therein ſets up for himſelf, in oppoſition to CHRIST, or at leaſt together with him, that he may ſhare in the honor of his own ſalvation with him. Upon the whole, he lives to ſelf, ſin, Satan, and the world, inſtead of living to CHRIST. Theſe ways of living are in themſelves, and in GOD's account, as diſtant as heaven and earth; and will certainly, one day, be found to be ſo, whatever ſome may think of them now.

There is accordingly, as wide a difference in their death. The believer loſes nothing by dying, that is worth his keeping, or that is not made up in ſomething every way better. If he parts with dear friends and comforts here, he only exchanges them for others, that are infinitely more valuable and delightful in another world; he gets rid of all that tends to make him miſerable, and gains all poſſible bleſſedneſs there. All his evil things ceaſe, and all his good things commence, in their endleſs variety and perfection, when he comes to die. But the unbeliever loſes all his comforts at death, is parted from all his beloved companions, friends and relatives, riches, honors and pleaſures, and enters into the worſt of company, and into woe and miſery, unutterable and everlaſting. He has all his good things here, which can laſt but for a little while; and he has nothing but the moſt dreadful torments hereafter, *in the lake, which burns for ever and ever.* Hence *Abraham* ſaid to the rich man in the parable, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receiveds't thy good things, and* Lazarus *evil things: But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented* (*y*). We may infer,

2. That ſuch amiable living and dying, as our text deſcribes, are a noble atteſtation to the truth, excellence, and power of the Goſpel.

It is upon its principles, all centering in CHRIST, that ſuch a life is formed, and ſuch a death obtained: It is theſe that, under divine influence, animate a life

(*y*) Luke xvi. 25.

life of faith in our LORD JESUS, and of devotedneſs and obedience to him; and that ſupport the chriſtian in his dying agonies, and give him the brighteſt proſpects of, and a certain introduction to eternal gain: It is theſe that have ſuch wonderful efficacy to the moſt deſirable uſefulneſs of life, and happineſs of death. And what is all this? but a viſible practical demonſtration, that thoſe Goſpel-principles, which are the means of producing theſe important and invaluable effects, are of GOD; and that he owns them, and impreſſes them by his Spirit for his own glory, and for the preſent and everlaſting advantage of thoſe, to whom *to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.*

They that had the pleaſure of being moſt intimately acquainted with the late Reverend Mr *John Hubbard*, muſt, I am perſuaded, be fully convinced, that this ſort of life and death, was, in a diſtinguiſhed degree, exemplified in him; and I think none of his enemies, if he had any ſuch, can deny it. Though funeral-orations in praiſe of the dead are as much my averſion, as they were his, who rather choſe to be approved of GOD, than man; yet his known worth, and your juſt expectations demand, that I ſhould not be wholly ſilent about him: And I cannot help ſaying, that you read his character and end, in miniature, as ſet out in our text, abating the difference between an Apoſtle, and an ordinary miniſter of CHRIST.

As to his life; GOD had bleſſed him with a vigorous, healthy conſtitution, and good natural parts; with a ſtrong memory, a flowing invention, and a judicious mind; with warm and tender affections, under the guidance and government of rational, and religious principles; with an exceeding happy temper, compaſſionate and ſympathizing, honeſt, free and open, affable, friendly and communicative; and with a large ſtock of uſeful literature, in various arts and ſciences, together with a rich treaſure of theological knowledge: His acquaintance, particularly, with the ſcriptures of the old and new teſtament, was

was so uncommonly extensive and familiar, as to supercede his use of a concordance, which, it seems, had no place in his library: And to sanctify all these excellent endowments for his Master's use, he gave unquestionable evidences, in the serious turn of his spirit, and in the general course of a conscientious and circumspect walk before GOD and men, that his heart was deeply seasoned with grace.

All this eminently fitted him for, and he chearfully devoted it to, the honor of his great LORD, in the service of the sanctuary; in which, for between twenty and thirty years, he successfully *studied to shew himself approved; a workman, that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (z). And, about three years before his lamented decease, he, at the earnest request of a society of christian friends and brethren, took upon him the care of educating young men for the ministry, that had given good proofs of their having received the grace of GOD; and he discharged this important trust with indefatigable assiduity and pains, and with great and growing reputation, to the abundant satisfaction and improvement of those, that came under his tuition.

He had carefully and thoroughly studied his Bible, and the various controversies raised upon it; and deliberately weighed the arguments on both sides, with an humble dependence on the Father of lights, on the great prophet of the church, and on the Spirit of truth, for all guidance; and, in the issue, settled with entire satisfaction, upon judgment, and with a delightful relish, upon experience, in that scheme of evangelical doctrines, which are commonly known by the name of *Calvinistic*. These he had well digested, and was very able to defend against opponents; and for the chief of these, he had a fervent, steady, and laudable zeal, sweetly tempered with a truly christian candor towards others, that were not just in his own way of thinking. But his heart seemed most

(z) 2 Tim. ii. 15.

most earnestly set upon reducing all his principles to experience and practice, in himself and others. For this he zealously labored in the pulpit, in his own family, among his pupils, and in conversation with christian friends. And that he might, through divine grace, fulfil all the parts of the ministry, which he received of the LORD JESUS, to the richest advantage; he was as great a redeemer of time, as most in his day, for laying in, and laying out, to the service of his generation, according to the will of GOD.

He sat very loose from the world, and would not intangle himself with the affairs of this life; but left the chief management of them to his prudent and pious consort; and gave himself wholly to his peculiar work, which was his great delight, and in which he labored abundantly. This he did, with great constancy and faithfulness, in this church and congregation, in his academical employment, in his turns at the *Weekly Merchant*'s lecture at *Pinner's Hall*, and Mr *Coward*'s lecture at *Little St Helen*'s, and an *Expository* lecture in the winter evenings, at the same place; and at two *Monthly* exercises, for humiliation and prayer, with a Sermon; besides many other occasional services, to which he was called, and which he readily engaged in. Thus *to him to live was Christ.*

And as to death's being his gain; we may have the most satisfactory assurances of this, in reflection on *his living to Christ*, after the manner, that has been briefly sketched out; and on his own words upon his sick and death-bed, which were taken from his mouth, at divers times, in broken sentences, under the violence of agonizing pains, while his head was very clear and composed. Some of these (which I cannot forbear transcribing) were as follow. "I "have no doubt of my eternal interest—Why will "ye not let me die—Father, help me, my heavenly "Father and my GOD—I desire to be resigned, I "desire to be resigned. Why should I desire to "live?

" live? God has made with me an everlasting cove-
" nant, well ordered in all things, and sure, which is
" all my salvation, and all my desire.—My Father in
" heaven, my covenant-father, help me; lay no
" more upon me, than thou wilt enable me to bear.
" Let patience have its perfect work.—A God near
" at hand, and not afar off, a most endearing cha-
" racter! — I was prepared for this illness. For I
" have been preaching * upon these words, *Rom.* viii.
" 37. *Nay, in all these things we are more than con-*
" *querors.*—These tabernacles of ours are from, and
" ordered by God himself, every pin of them; and
" it is fit that he should have the pulling of them
" down, in his own way: He doth all things with
" weight and measure.—Having a desire to depart
" and be with Christ, which is best; yet content I
" am to stay, if God has any further work for me
" to do. — I put my trust in thee, O Lord. — A
" preserver of hope. Let me not be ashamed.—Put
" your trust in the Lord; pour out your hearts be-
" fore him; for our God is a refuge for us. — O
" Father of compassion, help me: As a father pities
" his children; so the Lord pities them that fear
" him.—I will never leave you, nor forsake you.—
" The Lord is supreme; he doth as he pleases in
" the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants
" of the earth—All my springs are in thee—I am in
" good hands; it is better to fall into the hands of
" God, than into the hands of man. — A guilty,
" weak, helpless worm, on thy kind arms I fall,
" dear Jesus; in thee I trust for strength, righte-
" ousness, and acceptance: Surely every man at his
" best estate, is altogether vanity. — How long, O
" Lord, ere thou wilt come and help me! Come,
" Lord, come quickly. Now do it for Christ's
" sake. I beseech thee deliver me from my pains;
" I am thy humble petitioner. Now to glorify God

* At *Haberdasher's Hall* in the morning of that Lord's-day, on which the fever approached, that issued in his death.

" in the furnace, what an honor! — O for that faith " which overcomes the world! It nullifies it, and " shows it to be a bauble—O the excellency of faith! " O now increase my faith, and make me more than " conqueror. — I beseech thee release me one way " or other. Thou canst do it, O that thou wouldst. " Come, LORD, and make no tarrying—Subjection " to the Father of Spirits." He would often say under his grievous pains and agonies, " It is well. " It is fit we should endure pain and trouble here; " for we shall have none hereafter; there the inha- " bitants shall not say they are sick—Man soon fell " from his first covenant; but GOD made a more " glorious covenant with his Son. Now let me give " up myself to CHRIST," and then added, with a solemn pause after it, " I do, I do.—O glorify GOD! " I would have all men do it—Through him we are " more than conquerors. He is all my salvation, " and all my desire. Amen."

After these and many other expressions of the like believing, humble, resigned, joyful and assured strain, some of which were often repeated in the two or three last days of his illness, he said, with his expiring breath, " I now give up the ghost." With these last words in his mouth he immediately departed, on *Wednesday*, half an hour after four in the afternoon, *July* 13, 1743, in the 51st year of his age. Thus he died in the faith and comfort of those evangelical principles, which he had tried and proved, and preached, and lived upon, for many years. May we severally finish our course with joy like him! But, to conclude, we may infer,

3. That we ought to be deeply concerned to imitate those in life, to whom to live was CHRIST, as ever we would have, and hope for, their gain in death.

Living to CHRIST, and gaining by death, are so closely connected, that it is in vain for any of us to desire, and hope *to die the death of the righteous*; unless

unleſs we like, and chooſe, and practiſe their life. Here then we ſhould begin, in a humble dependence on the grace of CHRIST, if we would have their happy end.

Had I time, and would the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe, which is too long already, admit of it, I would earneſtly and particularly recommend the fine example of our dear deceaſed friend and brother, in the various ſteps in which he followed CHRIST, to the imitation of his mourning relations, of his late pupils, of the church and congregation, that ſtatedly aſſemble in this place, of myſelf and brethren in the miniſtry, and of every one that hears me. But a brief hint or two muſt ſuffice.

As for you, his dear relict, let the intimate and engaging acquaintance which you have had, for many years, with his holy and religious temper and behaviour in his own houſe, as well as in the houſe of GOD, and houſes of his friends, animate you to a noble emulation; that you, through a continuance of divine influence, may copy after him in his faith, his love and zeal, and every other grace, with which he was adorned; and in the whole of his good converſation in CHRIST. This is the beſt improvement that can be made of the awful ſtroke of GOD's hand, which now lies ſo heavy upon you. And if you are helped to make this uſe of it, it will ſweeten your bittereſt ſorrows, will revive and ſeal the inſtructions of his life, and turn his ſo much bewailed death to your own, as well as his greateſt gain.

And you, the dear fatherleſs offspring, ſhould remember his wife, faithful and tender counſel and example, and charge it upon your conſciences, as I now do in the name of my great LORD and Maſter, to obſerve and follow them; that you, by the bleſſing of GOD on your reflections upon them, may be preſerved from all the corruptions, in principle and practice, of this dangerous and degenerate age, which he uſed ſo ſeriouſly and affectionately to caution you

againſt; and that you may be excited, and engaged to adhere to thoſe truths and ways, in which he ſo happily and honorably lived and died. I rejoice to hear, that the two elder of you have already, in your ſo early days, ſolemnly given yourſelves up to the LORD in his church. May theſe promiſing beginnings be continued, and confirmed, with growing improvements, till the day of JESUS CHRIST! And may you all be the favorites of heaven, the gracious and dutiful ſons and daughters, and ſo the joy, of your diſconſolate mother, and the hopes of the riſing generation! Let none of you expect to ſee your good father's face, and the face of CHRIST, with comfort, at the great day, if you caſt his paternal and miniſterial admonitions behind your backs: But think you hear him, though dead, ſtill ſpeaking to each of you, as *David* did to his ſon *Solomon*, *Know thou the God of thy father*; *and ſerve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind*: *For the Lord ſearches all hearts, and underſtands all the imaginations of the thoughts: If thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee*; *but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off for ever* (*a*).

As to this church, and the pupils that were under his charge, I would ſay to them, *Remember him, that had the rule over you, and ſpoke to you the word of God*; *whoſe faith follow, conſidering the end of his converſation* (*b*). And I would leave it, as a moſt concerning point, with myſelf, with my brethren in the miniſtry, and with every one here preſent, that, according to our reſpective ſtations, *we be not ſlothful*; *but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes* (*c*).

(*a*) 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. (*b*) Heb xiii. 7.
(*c*) Heb. vi. 12.

SERMON

SERMON XVII.

The unchangeable Duration of GOD's Kindneſs and Covenant.

Preached at *Artillery-Lane*, *Feb.* 25, 1749-50, on Occaſion of the Death of the Reverend Mr *Mordecai Andrews*, who departed this Life *Feb.* 16, in the 33d Year of his Age.

ISAIAH LIV. 10.

For the mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed, ſaith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

IT is by the unanimous requeſt of this church of CHRIST, that I am called hither, on the mournful occaſion of GOD's having lately taken from them their dearly beloved and excellent paſtor, in the midſt of his growing life and uſefulneſs, who had labored ſome years with great indearment and eminent ſucceſs among them: And it is according to their appointment, that I am to diſcourſe on this paſſage of ſcripture, to aſſiſt their ſpiritual improvement

of that awful and moſt tenderly touching ſtroke of providence. The reaſon, as I am informed, of their deſiring this to be the ſubject of our preſent contemplations, was, becauſe they apprehended, that, thro' divine influence, it might be of good uſe for reminding them of the bleſſings of GOD's love and covenant, which, together with the obligations that ariſe from thence, it ſeems, were the darling themes of his public miniſtrations and private converſation, who had been ſet over them in the LORD. Delightful themes indeed! May the great Head of the church enable me to ſpeak, and you to hear, ſome thoughts upon them, that may be ſuited and rendered effectual, to promote our preſent ſupport and comfort, and to animate our progreſs in faith, love and obedience, for the remainder of our pilgrimage on earth, and our ſolid hopes of an everlaſting abode with CHRIST in heaven!

The chapter, where our text is found, contains a prophecy of the glory of the church upon *Iſrael*'s return from the *Babyloniſh* captivity; or rather, ultimately at leaſt, upon the vaſt inlargement of its borders by the ingrafting of the *Gentiles* with them in Goſpel-days. It begins with calling upon the church to rejoice and triumph on account of her approaching fruitfulneſs and increaſe, *ver.* 1, 4. and on account of her covenant-relation to GOD, and of its perpetuity, notwithſtanding the ſhort eclipſe of her light aud joy, and her doleful ſeaſon of darkneſs and ſorrow, which ſhould be followed with everlaſting manifeſtations of his love and favor, who ſtood in the relation of a huſband to her. *For thy Maker*, ſays he, *is thy huſband, the Lord of hoſts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of* Iſrael, *the God of the whole earth ſhall he be called: For the Lord has called thee as a woman forſaken and grieved in ſpirit, and a wife of youth, when thou waſt refuſed, ſaith thy God. For a ſmall moment have I forſaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from*

from thee for a moment; but with everlaſting kindneſs will I have mercy on thee, ſaith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah *unto me: For as I have ſworn that the waters of* Noah *ſhould no more go over the earth; ſo have I ſworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee*, ver. 5, 9. Then come in the words of our text. *For the mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed, ſaith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.* In theſe words, that are to employ our preſent meditations, we have,

Firſt, The changeable ſtate and frame of this world, which ſhall iſſue in its final diſſolution. *The mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed.* In oppoſition hereunto we have,

Secondly, The unchangeable duration of God's kindneſs to, and covenant with his people. *But my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed.* And,

Thirdly, The confirmation and reaſon of this, as contained in theſe words, *ſaith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.* Let us ſpend a few thoughts on each of theſe in their order, beginning with,

Firſt, The changeable ſtate and frame of this world, which ſhall iſſue in its final diſſolution. *The mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed.*

Mountains and hills, literally taken, ſeem to be ſome of the firmeſt and moſt durable parts of the earth, and to ſtand ſo ſtrong as never to be removed; and therefore, with reference to the common opinion of men about them, they are called *the everlaſting mountains*, and *the perpetual hills*; and yet are there ſaid to be *ſcattered and bow* at the preſence of the Lord, *whoſe ways are everlaſting* (*d*); and may be ſo called, in the ſtricteſt and propereſt ſenſe of the expreſſion, as they are all according to the eternal counſel of his will, and ſhall go on in continual ex-

(*d*) Habak. iii. 6.

ecutions of it, for anſwering the purpoſes of his love to his people, and of his righteous wrath upon his enemies, through all the ages of time to an endleſs eternity.—Mount *Sinai*, and the hills about it, were ſhaken at the delivery of the law; and hiſtory informs us of mountains and hills, that have been ſwallowed up, and removed out of their places, by earthquakes; and we are aſſured that the higheſt and loweſt of them ſhall all be utterly thrown down, and melted away, at the final diſſolution of this world; when *the earth and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up, and all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved* (*e*).

Or mountains and hills may be underſtood figuratively, as they often are in prophetic language, to ſignify great and mighty powers on earth, and the idols that were worſhipped on mountains; as when it is ſaid, *Truly in vain is ſalvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: Truly in the Lord our God is the ſalvation of* Iſrael (*f*): And with a reference to the ſtrong and formidable enemies of his people, that had ſet themſelves againſt the rebuilding of the temple at *Jeruſalem*, he ſaid, *Who art thou, O great mountain? before* Zerubbabel *thou ſhalt become a plain: And he ſhall bring forth the headſtone thereof with ſhoutings, grace, grace unto it* (*g*), as typical of CHRIST and the Goſpel church, which he would lay the foundation of, and finiſh, to the praiſe of the glory of divine grace. GOD alſo ſpeaking of *Babylon*, and all the inhabitants of *Chaldea*, ſaid, *Behold I am againſt thee, O deſtroying mountain, which deſtroyeſt all the earth; and I will ſtretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain; and thou ſhalt be deſolate for ever, ſaith the Lord* (*h*). Thoſe metaphorical hills and mountains, that ſeemed to be moſt firmly eſtabliſhed in their power and dominion; and every one of the four great monarchies of the earth, that, in their

(*e*) 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11.
(*f*) Jer. iii. 23.
(*g*) Zech. iv. 7.
(*h*) Jer. li. 24, 25, 26.

their turns bore down all before them; all theſe, together with their idols, have long ſince been removed, and come to nothing. Yea, and all antichriſtian enemies and idolatry ſhall be utterly deſtroyed: For the time is coming, when it ſhall be actually ſaid in hiſtory of the *Romiſh* myſtical *Babylon*, as it may already be with regard to the purpoſe of GOD, and is in prophecy, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen* (*i*).

And what are all the concerns of this world, whether of a public or private nature, that bid faireſt for ſettlement and long continuance? They are tranſitory, ſhifting ſcenes, that will ſoon be intirely withdrawn: *For the faſhion of this world paſſeth away* (*k*.) What are all the troubles and enjoyments of this life? They are wearing off apace, and ſhall ceaſe for ever. What are all the men upon earth, whether friends, that we have the moſt confidence in, or enemies, that we are moſt afraid of, but periſhing mortals? Hence it is ſaid, on one hand, *Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: In that very day his thoughts periſh* (*l*). And, on the other hand, GOD ſays to his people. *I, even I am he, that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall die, and of the ſon of man, which ſhall be made as graſs* (*m*)*?* And muſt not every one of us die out of this world, whatever our ſtate before GOD be as to another? The healthieſt, ſtouteſt and ſtrongeſt, as well as the ſickly and weak; the youngeſt, and thoſe that are in the bloom and vigor of life, as well as the moſt aged; the prince as well as the peaſant; the ſaint as well as the ſinner; the miniſter, as well as his flock, muſt ſoon depart, GOD only knows how ſoon, perhaps very ſuddenly, before they or their friends are aware; and then they ſhall be no more upon earth. *Your fathers, where are they? The prophets,*

(*i*) Rev. xiv. 8. and xviii. 2.
(*k*) 1 Cor. vii. 31.
(*l*) Pſal. cxlvi. 3, 4.
(*m*) Iſai. li. 12.

prophets, do they live for ever (*n*)*?* And what is the favor or friendſhip of men, that we think ourſelves moſt ſecure of? How changeable, fickle and inconſtant do we often find it, while we live in this world? And how incapable is it of being any further advantageous or ſerviceable to us, when the place, that now knows us, ſhall know us no more? All theſe things, though we might fancy them to be as ſtable as hills and mountains, are running on, and running off, and will ſoon be ſwallowed up in eternity, and be removed as far from us, or we from them, as if they had never exiſted at all. — But, in oppoſition to the failing, changeable and diſſolving ſtate of all theſe, we have,

Secondly, The unchangeable duration of God's kindneſs to, and covenant with his people. *But my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed.* Here it may be proper,

I. To give you a little account of God's kindneſs to his people, and of the covenant of his peace with them. And then,

II. To ſhew that his kindneſs ſhall not depart from them; nor the covenant of his peace be removed. I ſhall therefore,

I. Give ſome account of God's kindneſs to his people, and of the covenant of his peace with them. Let me offer a few thoughts upon both theſe diſtinctly, in their order. We ſhall begin with,

1. The kindneſs of God to his people.

The word rendered his kindneſs, ſignifies his gracious and bountiful benignity, incluſive of his free love or favor, and of all its ſpecial fruits and effects. It is his *merciful kindneſs*, as it is ſtiled, *Pſal.* cxvii. 2. and cxix. 76; and takes in all *the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindneſs towards us through Chriſt Jeſus*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *Eph.* ii. 7. It is *his*

(*n*) Zech. i. 5.

his loving kindneſs, which is better than life, Pſal. lxiii. 3. and is often mentioned in conjunction with *his mercies*, and *his tender mercies, which* are ſaid to *have been ever of old* (*o*). It is that kindneſs, wherein GOD *married* his people, and *became a huſband* to them; which he had mentioned for their comfort in *Iſai.* liv. 5. and concerning which he ſaid, *I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteouſneſs, and in judgment, and in loving kindneſs, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulneſs; and thou ſhalt know the Lord* (*p*). So that it is the peculiar kindneſs, in which he entered into a marriage-covenant with them, and will ever fulfil his gracious and faithful engagements therein unto them. This leads us to conſider,

2*dly*, The covenant of his peace with them.

This is no other than the covenant of grace, and that with a ſpecial reference to its pureſt, cleareſt, and moſt glorious and perfect adminiſtration in the Goſpel-ſtate, which, by way of diſtinction from the legal form, in which it was adminiſtred under the *Moſaic* diſpenſation, is called a new covenant; tho', for the ſubſtance of the covenant itſelf, it was all along one and the ſame: For *the law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Chriſt to* Abraham, *could not diſannul it, that it ſhould make the promiſe of none effect* (*q*). But, *behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant* (as to the beſt and laſt adminiſtration of it) *with the houſe of* Iſrael, *and with the houſe of* Judah: *Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of* Egypt.—*For this is the covenant, that I will make with the houſe of* Iſrael *after thoſe days, ſaith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they ſhall*

(*o*) Pſal. xxv. 6.
(*p*) Hoſ. ii. 19, 20.
(*q*) Gal. iii. 17.

ſhall be to me a people.——*For all ſhall know me, from the leaſt to the greateſt: For I will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſs; and their ſins and iniquities will I remember no more, In that he ſays a new covenant, he has made the firſt old*, as to the manner of its diſpenſation. *Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vaniſh away*, as the *Jewiſh* conſtitution then was (*r*). Accordingly JESUS is ſtiled *the mediator of the new covenant*, in the evangelical adminiſtration of it, *Heb.* xii. 24. And this is the covenant our text ſpeaks of: For it ſtands in a prophecy of that ſtate of the church, in which *all her children ſhould be taught of the Lord*, ver. 13. and in which the *Gentiles* ſhould be called, as appears from the three firſt verſes of the chapter: And thoſe verſes are introduced immediately after the account, that had been given at large, in the preceding chapter, of the atoning death and ſacrifice of CHRIST, when he *ſhould make his ſoul an offering for ſin*; and of GOD the Father's promiſes to him, that *he*, thereupon, *ſhould ſee his ſeed, and prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhould proſper in his hand*; that *he ſhould ſee of the travel of his ſoul, and be ſatisfied*; and that *by his knowledge*, or the knowledge of him, as GOD's *righteous ſervant, he ſhould juſtify many*; *becauſe he ſhould bear their iniquities* (*s*). And therefore though the promiſe in our text primarily related to GOD's antient people the *Jews*, yet it equally included the *Gentiles*, that ſhould make up the inlargement of the church, and ſo belongs to every true believer, of what nation ſoever, to the end of ages. Every one of them may think he hears GOD ſaying to him, in particular, *my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed.* Now this may be called the covenant of his peace, as it is the covenant, or gracious conſtitution, which he is the author of; and by which he is at peace with his people through JESUS CHRIST, the mediator of it; and

(*r*) Heb. viii 8, 13. (*s*) Iſai. liii. 10, 11.

and freely beſtows all bleſſings upon them for his ſake.

(1). It is the covenant, or gracious conſtitution, which GOD himſelf is the author of.

I take the word covenant both [ברית] in the *Hebrew*, and (διαθηκη) in the *Greek*, to be applicable to any conſtitution, diſpoſition or ſettlement, wherever it is uſed in ſcripture; the nature of which is to be determined by the context, and the perſons and things it refers to, whether it be in a way of mutual ſtipulation between two or more parties; or in a way of free promiſe, as that covenant was, which GOD made with *Noah and every living creature, that day and night ſhould not ceaſe; and that the waters ſhould no more become a flood to deſtroy all fleſh* (*t*). This is called his *covenant of the day and of the night* (*u*); and is referred to in the verſe immediately before our text: And ſo the covenant, here ſpoken of, is to be conſidered as the abſolute and gratuitous, or free conſtitution, which GOD has eſtabliſhed between him and his people, relating chiefly to their ſpiritual and eternal concerns. This is the covenant, which he himſelf has made, with reſpect to his being at peace with them. And who, but GOD himſelf, could be the author of a covenant, ſo full of grace, for the pardon, recovery, and eternal ſalvation of any of the fallen children of *Adam*, after the entrance of ſin, and the breach of the original covenant of works, whereby all bleſſings were forfeited, and all miſeries, for time and eternity, were intailed upon them? It is his prerogative, and his glory, to make a covenant of peace with them, who were at variance with him: It is the product of his own infinite wiſdom, authority and love; and proceeds merely from the ſelf-moving and overflowing benevolent diſpoſition of his own heart toward them. Accordingly it is well known, that he often ſpeaks of it as his

(*t*) Gen. ix. 8—17. and viii. 22.
(*u*) Jer. xxxiii. 20, 25.

his own free act and deed, to make, and establish his everlasting covenant with them.

(2.) It is the covenant, by which he is at peace with his people through JESUS CHRIST, the Mediator of it.

The eternal Father promised to *give him for a covenant of the people, and for a light to the* Gentiles, *that he might be his salvation to the ends of the earth* (*x*). And CHRIST having fulfilled the grand condition of the covenant, by his obedience and sufferings unto death, is said to be *our peace*, and to *reconcile both*, Jews *and* Gentiles, *unto God, in one body by the cross*; *having slain the enmity thereby* (*y*); and it is upon the foot of the covenant, that *Gentile*-believers, *who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ*; and *who*, in former ages, *were aliens from the commonwealth of* Israel, *and strangers from the covenants of promise, are now no more strangers and foreigners*; *but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*, as the Apostle declares (*z*).

The peace-making sacrifice of CHRIST is the *meritorious cause*, not of the covenant itself, but of all its blessings; and is the solemn irrevocable *confirmation* of it. He thereby *obtained eternal redemption for us* (*a*), which includes deliverance from sin and from the wrath to come, and an inheritance of all the blessings of eternal life; and is called *the redemption of the purchased possession* (*b*). And he thereby *ratified* all its articles to the heirs of promise, past repeal, as the Apostle represents his death, in allusion to a *testamentary disposition* or settlement, *which of necessity requires the death of the testator, to put it in force* (*c*). And so *all the promises of God*, in this covenant, *are yea and amen in Christ unto the glory of God* (*d*): All its promises of pardon, peace and reconcilia-

(*x*) Is. xlix. 6, 8.
(*z*) Eph. ii. 12, 13, 19.
(*b*) Eph. i. 14.
(*d*) 2 Cor. i. 20.
(*y*) Eph. ii. 14, 16.
(*a*) Heb. ix. 12.
(*c*) Heb. ix. 16, 17.

conciliation; of juſtification and ſanctification; of firſt grace and all after-increaſes of it, and perſeverance in it; and of ſeaſonable ſuccour and aſſiſtance, conſolation and preſervation to eternal glory; all theſe promiſes are an eſtabliſhed ſettlement, according to the merciful tenour of this covenant, as they are ſummarily repreſented in that before mentioned, *Heb.* viii. 10, 11, 12. And the grand comprehenſive bleſſing, that all the reſt of the promiſes tend to, and ſhall finally iſſue in, is the perfection of glory and felicity in heaven itſelf: For *this is* emphatically *the promiſe, that he has promiſed us, even eternal life* (*e*). And becauſe all theſe bleſſings were purchaſed by the blood of CHRIST, and the covenant, which contains them, is confirmed by it; therefore it is called *the new teſtament in his blood* (*f*); and his blood is called *the blood of the everlaſting covenant, through which the God of peace, brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great ſhepherd of the ſheep* (*g*).

(3.) It is the covenant, *by which the God of peace freely beſtows all bleſſings upon them, for Chriſt's ſake.*

Peace is often uſed in ſcripture to ſignify all manner of *proſperity and happineſs*; and may be conſidered here, as conſiſting of peace with God, thro' our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and of peace in our own ſouls, and one with another; together with every thing that, upon the whole, is beſt for us. And theſe bleſſings, which GOD gives us with CHRIST, and in and through him, are the moſt ſubſtantial and excellent of all others. Hence the Apoſtle breaks out in rapturous praiſe, ſaying, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all ſpiritual bleſſings in heavenly places*, or things, *in Chriſt: according as he has choſen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we ſhould be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predeſtinated us*

(*e*) 1 John ii. 25. (*f*) 1 Cor. xi. 25.
(*g*) Heb. xiii. 20.

us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (*g*); and at other times, he speaks of its being *given us in the behalf of Christ to believe on his name*; and of GOD's *having forgiven us for Christ's sake* (*h*). Yea, *godliness*, according to his covenant, *is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (*i*): And he accordingly bestows the good things of this life upon his covenant-people, as far as he knows them to be most needful for them, and most subservient to his glory, and their happiness in the life to come: *For we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose.—If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, How shall he not with him freely give us all things* (*k*)? And we are assured that *the Lord God is a sun and shield: The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly* (*l*). This brings us to,

Secondly, The unchangeable duration of his kindness and covenant.

(1.) *His kindness shall not depart from them.*

This is spoken in opposition to *the mountains that shall depart*. Though the whole frame of nature shall be dissolved, and every thing in this world, that seemed to be most firm and durable, and that we are apt to have the greatest dependence upon, or to be most afraid of, shall fail; and though the mountainous parts of the earth, that may be thought to stand on the strongest basis, shall be displaced; yet all these shall sooner fail, than the loving kindness of GOD; and after they are all gone, and sunk into ruins, his kindness to his people shall remain invariably the same, in its design, and operations suitable to it. *For I* (says the LORD) *will make an everlasting*

(*g*) Eph. i. 3, 4, 5.
(*h*) Phil. i. 29. and Eph. iv. 32.
(*i*) 1 Tim. iv. 8.
(*k*) Rom. viii. 28, 31, 32.
(*l*) Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good.—Yea, *I will rejoice over them to do them good, with my whole heart, and with my whole ſoul* (*m*).

He may indeed, for wiſe and holy ends, correct them for their offences by outward afflictions, and may hide his face from them by withdrawing the light of his countenance; and they that truly *fear the Lord* may thereupon *walk in darkneſs, and have no light* of comfort, or ſatisfaction about their own ſtate before him, or intereſt in his love. In theſe reſpects he may *for a ſmall moment forſake them*; *and in a little wrath*, or anger, though not in a way of avenging juſtice, as a legiſlator or judge, to execute the law-curſe upon them; yet in a way of becoming reſentment, on account of their iniquities, as their holy father, and in a way of rectoral puniſhment, as the righteous governor of this world, he may *hide his face from them for a moment: But with great mercies will he gather them*; *and with everlaſting kindneſs will have mercy on them*, as he had ſaid a little before our text, *ver.* 7, 8. And at another time he ſays of *Iſrael, For the iniquity of his covetouſneſs was I wroth, and ſmote him: I hid me, and was wroth*; *and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart:* But immediately adds, *I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him*; *I will lead him alſo, and reſtore comforts unto him, and to his mourners* (*n*).

Theſe ſhort forſakings, and hidings of his face, are no more a proof that *his kindneſs is departed from them*, than the rebukes and frowns of a wiſe, though tender and affectionate father, upon his children, for their faults, are, that he has no love or favor towards them. For it is only when the infinitely wiſe, holy and gracious God ſees, that *ſparing the rod would ſpoil the child*, and that this ſort of diſcipline, how grievous ſoever, is moſt needful and beſt, that he makes uſe of it; and as it is always in prudent

(*m*) Jer. xxxii. 40, 41. (*n*) Iſ. lvii. 17, 18.

dent and judicious love to his children, that he brings them under chaſtiſements, the argument from thence holds rather for, than againſt the continuance of his kindneſs to them. Hence the Apoſtle ſays, for their ſupport and encouragement, *Whom the Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth: If ye endure chaſtening, God dealeth with you as with ſons: For what ſon is he whom the father chaſteneth not?* And a little after he tells us, that *God chaſtens them for their profit, that they might be partakers of his holineſs; and though no chaſtening for the preſent ſeems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheleſs, afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs to them that are exerciſed thereby* (*o*). This ſhews, that, even in ſuch afflictive circumſtances, he does not utterly take away his loving kindneſs from them; but that, as *he has loved them with an everlaſting love; and therefore with loving kindneſs has drawn them* (*p*); ſo he *will reſt in his love. Having loved his own,* as it is ſaid of our LORD, *he loves them to the end; and with everlaſting kindneſs will he have mercy on them* (*q*). Hence,

(2.) *The covenant of his peace ſhall not be removed.*

This ſtands in oppoſition to *the hills being removed.* They may be ſo, and one time or other ſhall be ſo; but, ſays GOD, the covenant of my peace ſhall ſtand faſt, and never be removed; this ſhall abide immoveably, and for ever.

As, I think, no inſtance can be found of GOD's ever reverſing any thing he has ſworn to; ſo he has ſworn to this covenant, that it may be irreverſible, ſaying, in the preceding verſe, *This is as the waters of* Noah *to me; for as I have ſworn that the waters of* Noah *ſhall no more go over the earth; ſo have I ſworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee;* that is, he would not do it, ſo as to withdraw his kindneſs

(*o*) Heb. xii. 6, 7, 10, 11. (*p*) Jer. xxxi. 3.
(*q*) Zeph. iii. 17.

kindneſs from them, or break his covenant with them, as appears from what follows in our text to explain it: And this agrees with what he ſaid concerning *David* and his children, in a typical view to CHRIST and his ſpiritual ſeed, *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips; once have I ſworn by my holineſs, that I will not lie unto* David (*r*). Hence it is ſtiled an everlaſting covenant in ſeveral places, ſome of which have been, and others may ſtill further be quoted: and it may be ſo called, as it was made with CHRIST, and with GOD's elect in him, as their conſtituted head from all eternity! for *he was ſet up*, in that capacity, *from everlaſting* (*s*); and *grace was given them in Chriſt Jeſus, before the world began* (*t*).—But GOD's ſaying, *the covenant of my peace ſhall not be removed*, leads our thoughts moſt particularly and directly forwards, to aſſure us, that it is an everlaſting covenant, as it ſhall be continued for ever: And this may be conſidered, as the covenant itſelf ſhall abide for ever, and all its bleſſings are of an everlaſting nature; and as it is, and ſhall be made good to every true believer for ever.

(1.) It is an everlaſting covenant, as it ſhall abide for ever, and all its bleſſings are of an everlaſting nature.

The covenant itſelf is an everlaſting covenant, that ſhall never be diſannulled; and the new teſtament diſpenſation of it is ſpoken of, in oppoſition to that of the old teſtament, as conſiſting of *things that cannot be ſhaken*; and as *a kingdom that cannot be moved* (*u*), which, as is ſignified by *ſhaking yet once more*, intimates, that this evangelical conſtitution, ſhould remain immoveably for ever; and not be ſuperceded or aboliſhed by any other ſhaking, like that which removed the *Moſaic* diſpenſation.

(*r*) Pſal. lxxxix. 34, 35.
(*s*) Prov. viii. 23.
(*t*) 2 Tim. i. 9.
(*u*) Heb. xii. 27, 28.

And CHRIST, who is the mediator of this new covenant, and comprehends all its bleſſings in himſelf, is the *ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever.* The redemption he has brought in, according to its tenor, is an eternal redemption. The inheritance which he has purchaſed, and which GOD has promiſed in the covenant, is an eternal inheritance. And the infinitely bleſſed GOD, who conſigns himſelf over to his people in this covenant, is the everlaſting GOD, and their portion for ever. GOD himſelf will never break this covenant with them; nor will he ſuffer them to break it ſo as to throw themſelves out of it. For *I* (ſays he) in the fore-mentioned *Jer.* xxxii. 40. *will make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me*, that is, they ſhall not utterly, totally or finally depart from me. They, thro' the influence of his new covenant-fear, ſhall be kept from going on in any way or courſe of ſinning, that is inconſiſtent with their covenant-ſtate; and they ſhall not be left to renounce and caſt off CHRIST, and turn apoſtates.

Though, alas! there are many ſinful infirmities, that ſtill remain, and corruptions that are not fully mortified and ſubdued in true believers themſelves; yet GOD has put ſuch a holy, fixed and governing diſpoſition into their hearts, that they greatly deteſt and lament them, and dare not give way to them; but make it their daily watch and prayer, and their conſcientious endeavour, concern and care, that all iniquity may be ſtill more and more crucified in them, till they get an abſolute victory over it, and an intire freedom from it; and the deſire of their ſouls, this way, ſhall at length be fulfilled; as the Apoſtle intimates, when, having prayed for the *Theſſalonians*, that the *God of peace would ſanctify them wholly, and that their whole ſpirit, ſoul and body, might be preſerved blameleſs to the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*;

Chriſt; he immediately adds, *Faithful is he that calleth you, who alſo will do it* (y). And we may ſafely depend upon this; for *Chriſt loved the church, and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctify and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the word; that he might preſent it to himſelf a glorious church, not having ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh* (z).

And as to the diſallowed and lamented imperfections and failings of God's People, it is one great article of his covenant, that *he will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſſes, and their ſins and iniquities will remember no more* (a). He is propitious to his covenant-ones, through the great mediator, who lives in heaven to plead his propitiation for them. Hence the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of ſuch, ſays, *If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, who is the propitiation for our ſins* (b). Accordingly, we are told, that God *has forgiven them all treſpaſſes* (c); and that *the blood of Jeſus Chriſt his ſon cleanſes them from all ſin* (c). Hence,

(2.) It is an everlaſting covenant, as it is and ſhall be made good to every true believer for ever.

They who are once really and internally taken into the bond of this covenant, ſhall be everlaſtingly in it: for it may be ſaid, with reſpect to God himſelf, and thoſe that he has eſpouſed by an everlaſting covenant, as he did of huſbands, that dealt treacherouſly by the wife of their youth, *he hates putting away* (e). And all his promiſes of ſaving benefits ſhall at all times, in their proper order, have their accompliſhment, as may be moſt ſuitable to their circumſtances; and ſhall be compleatly fulfilled to them for ever. This was *David*'s confidence and joy, as he expreſſed it, ſaying, *Although my houſe be not ſo with God*; (not ſo regular, holy and religious, as I would

(y) 1 Theſſ. v. 23, 24.
(z) Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.
(a) Heb. viii. 12.
(b) 1 John i. 2.
(c) Coloſ. ii. 13.
(d) 1 John i. 7.
(e) Mal. ii. 16.

wiſh) *yet he has made with me an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things and ſure: For this is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow* (*f*); which may be underſtood of the covenant of royalty, as typical of the covenant of grace made with CHRIST and his ſpiritual ſeed, in whoſe days things would be much better with *David*'s houſe, than they then were. And GOD, ſpeaking of this covenant, calls to ſinners to lay hold of it for themſelves, upon this encouragement, that it ſhall be an *everlaſting covenant* with them, ſaying, *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your ſouls ſhall live; and I will make an everlaſting covenant with you, even the ſure mercies of* David (*g*). And when he ſpeaks of betrothing his people in a marriage-covenant to himſelf, he tells them (as you have heard) it ſhall *be for ever*. But your time wears off; and therefore I cannot enlarge further on theſe things; nor have I room to add more than a few words on the laſt branch of the text, which gives us,

Thirdly, The confirmation and reaſon of this. The confirmation lies in the words, *Saith the Lord*; and the reaſon, in his adding, *that has mercy on thee.*

The unchangeable duration of his covenant is ſecured to us, by its being the peremptory declaration of the infinitely true and faithful God. A *ſaith the Lord*, is a divine confirmation of it, and may be depended upon; ſince he is the *God that cannot lie*, and *the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning* (*h*); and who ſaid, *I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye ſons of* Jacob *are not conſumed* (*i*). And yet the more fully to confirm his covenant to our faith, paſt all doubt, he had juſt before our text added his oath to it, as has been obſerved, *that by two immutable things*, his promiſe and his oath,

(*f*) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.
(*g*) Iſaiah lv. 3.
(*h*) James i. 17.
(*i*) Mal. iii. 6.

oath, *we might have ſtrong conſolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us* (*k*).

And the reaſon of his thus eſtabliſhing his covenant of peace with his people, is intimated by his ſpeaking of himſelf herein, as *the Lord, that has mercy upon them.* This excludes all pretences to deſert or merit in themſelves, as any reaſon, cauſe or motive to engage him to make and fulfil it, and reſolves it intirely into his own free mercy and compaſſionate kindneſs to them, of whom he ſaid at another time, *I will ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean; from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols will I cleanſe you. A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh; and I will give you a heart of fleſh; and I will put my ſpirit within you, and cauſe you to walk in my ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and do them.—Not for your ſakes do I this, ſaith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be aſhamed and confounded for your own ways, O houſe of* Iſrael (*l*). But theſe things have abundantly appeared in what has been already ſaid; and therefore, there is no great need to add any thing more upon them. Having now gone through my copious ſubject, as extenſively as I well could in a ſingle Diſcourſe; permit me to conclude with a ſerious addreſs,

USE, (1.) To the church and auditory, that uſually attended on the miniſtry of the lately deceaſed, and very valuable ſervant of CHRIST.

It is your duty and intereſt to reflect often upon, and endeavour, by divine grace, to make a right improvement of, the privileges and duties, that he ſo often recommended to you, as reſulting from God's unchangeable love and covenant. May it not be ſaid of him, as it was of *John the Baptiſt*, which it ſeems turned upon the thoughts of ſome among you, while you were mourning over the loſs of your dear miniſter; that *he was a burning and a ſhining light; and ye were willing*

(*k*) Heb. vi. 17, 18. (*l*) Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 26 27, 32.

for a ſeaſon, to rejoice in his light (*m*)*?* Did not you really think him to be ſuch a light? And were not your ſouls enlightned and warmed by means of the light of his doctrine, and his pathetic way of delivering it? Did ye not, for the little ſeaſon that God continued his precious life, admire and delight in thoſe important truths, that ſhone, and were impreſſive upon you, in his miniſtrations. But now the ſhort ſeaſon of your enjoying them is over. Take heed leſt your rejoicings in them wear off, and any of you ſhould be found ſuch ſtony-ground hearers, as our Lord ſpeaks of, *That heard the word, and anon with joy received it; yet they had not root in themſelves*, it not being an implanted and governing principle in their hearts; *but dured* only *for a while*; *and by and by they were offended* (*n*), and all came to nothing. Or leſt, as in the thorny-ground hearers, (*ver.* 22.) *the cares of this world, the deceitfulneſs of riches, and the pleaſures of this life, choke the word, and ye become unfruitful*, or *bring no fruit to perfection*, as we have it, *Luke* viii. 14.

See to it, O my dear friends, and beg of God, that the lively impreſſions you felt under the preaching of the word, may not prove to be only ſome ſudden touches upon your affections, without being rooted by grace in your hearts, to change their habitual bias, to ſettle your judgment, fix your principles and views, and influence your lives. Know ye, that *there has been a prophet among you*; and it highly concerns you to *remember him that had the rule over you*, as your ſpiritual guide, that, *conſidering the end of his converſation* (which you cannot but believe to have been exceeding happy, though the nature of his laſt illneſs diſabled him then to declare it) ye may imitate his faith and example, as far as therein he followed Christ. (*Heb.* xiii. 7.)

Though expatiating in funeral encomiums is greatly my averſion; becauſe they are commonly ſuſpected,

(*m*) John v. 35. (*n*) Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

ſuſpected, and often too much favor, of flattery; yet I cannot forbear obſerving, and appealing to hundreds, here preſent, for the truth of it, that he was a very fervent, zealous, evangelical and popular preacher. He cloſely ſtudied the ſacred oracles; and was well eſtabliſhed, upon mature deliberation, judgment and experience, in thoſe moſt concerning doctrines of the Goſpel, that lie at the very foundation of chriſtianity. He was a man of an excellent, amiable, kind and candid ſpirit; and exemplarily humble, familiar and courteous, upright and holy, in his converſation; a faithful miniſter, and a chearfully ſerious chriſtian; of a happy natural temper, which was adorned, enriched and improved with grace, and with good natural and acquired parts; all which contributed to make him a ſincere and agreeable friend, an affectionate huſband, a tender father, a diligent and conſcientious paſtor, and a pleaſant companion to his brethren in the miniſtry, and his other friends and acquaintance. He evidently had the glory of CHRIST, and the good of ſouls much at heart; and was willing to ſpend and be ſpent; yea, he over-ſpent himſelf, I had almoſt ſaid unto death, for their ſakes: And, like the great Apoſtle, *he did not count his life dear to himſelf; ſo that he might finiſh his courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which he had received of the Lord Jeſus, to teſtify the Goſpel of the grace of God* (*o*). And the LORD was abundantly with him, and owned his public and private labors to the conviction and converſion of many, and to the remarkable increaſe, as well as edification of this church.

If therefore any of you, my friends, forget all this, and do not *look to yourſelves, that ye loſe not thoſe things which he has wrought* (*p*), by his inſtructions, admonitions and exhortations, both he and they will riſe up as ſwift witneſſes againſt you in the day of CHRIST; when, I doubt not, but his account, *who watched*

(*o*) Acts xx. 24. (*p*) 2 John ver. 8.

watched for your ſouls, will be *with joy, and not with grief* to himſelf; but if it ſhould be otherwiſe to any of you, a dreadful account it will be, and ſadly *unprofitable for you* (*q*). *But, beloved, I am perſuaded better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak*, in love and faithfulneſs, by way of ſolemn caution to you. And as to thoſe of you, that have been effectually wrought upon, or ſubſtantially edified in faith, comfort and holineſs, by his miniſtry, as it is meet for me to think of you all that are regular members of the church lately under his paſtoral care, bleſs GOD for him, and for the benefit you have received by his means; and *continue in the things that you have heard*, according to the mind and will of GOD in his word, ſo as to hold faſt *the truth as it is in Jeſus:* Often call them to remembrance; and labor to live by faith upon them, and to live in all holy converſation and godlineſs anſwerable to them, that you may *adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things*, and may *ſhine* ſeverally, and all together, in conſtellation, *as lights in the world.* Your deſtitute circumſtances are now indeed very melancholy and affecting; and I heartily ſympathiſe and mourn with you in them, begging that the ſovereign LORD of all may ſanctify them to every one of you. But allow me to add a word or two further,

(2.) To you, the dear flock, and to the ſorrowful widow.

I beſeech you ſeverally to look to your kind, gracious and covenant GOD, to make up your great loſs. Though under-ſhepherds die, an affecting inſtance of which now pierces your bleeding hearts; yet let the members of this church recollect, that the great Shepherd of the ſheep, who was dead, is now alive, and lives for evermore. The GOD of peace has brought him again from the dead, thro' the blood of the everlaſting covenant; and has eſtabliſhed his covenant

(*q*) Heb. xiii. 17.

covenant with you, as a church of faithful believers, in and through him: And though he has chaſtened you ſorely in taking away your dear, laborious and ſucceſsful paſtor from your head; yet do not give way to unbelieving thoughts, as if *the kindneſs of your God were departed from you*, or *the covenant of his peace were removed.* Theſe remain ſtill the ſame; and he knows how to heal this awful breach, this deep and throbbing wound, and to furniſh you with another *paſtor after his own heart, that ſhall feed you with knowledge and underſtanding.* Look therefore to him; and with humble ſubmiſſion to his holy, all-wiſe, and ſovereign diſpoſals, continue your united prayers and entire dependence upon him, to direct you to, and ſettle you comfortably again under, *a workman, that needs not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

And while my heart is touched with the tendereſt concern for you, madam, the dear relict of the deceaſed, in your diſconſolate circumſtances, I would earneſtly recommend you, and your feeble infants, to a covenant GOD and Father in CHRIST. O! caſt all your care on him, who is *the widow's judge, and huſband, and the Father of the fatherleſs*; and *who cares for them*, that are more immediately caſt upon him, and put their truſt in him; which, in the preſent caſe, I hope both you, and all the dear relatives of the deceaſed, will be enabled to do. And you, madam, are now, in a ſpecial manner, called to commit yourſelf and yours to his love and care; and to leave all your concerns in his hands, with a calm reſignation to his holy will, and with humble and believing confidence, that your late huſband's GOD will *be your God, and the God of your ſeed*; and *will guide you with his counſel*, through all the ſolitary and afflicted circumſtances of this life, *and afterwards receive you to glory.*

AN

AN

EXHORTATION

TO THE

Reverend Mr *THOMAS TOWLE.*
Delivered at his Ordination, on 1 *Tim.* iv. 16.
at *Rope-makers Alley, London,* Mar. 24. 1747-8.

THE part appointed to me, in the ſolemn tranſactions of this day, is to remind you, my dear brother and fellow-laborer in the Goſpel, of the important buſineſs, obligations and encouragements, that belong to the miniſtry, which you have received of the LORD JESUS; and in his name to enforce them, in hope that the bleſſed Spirit will impreſs them, like indelible characters, upon your heart. In attempting this, I much rather chuſe to entreat you as a brother, whom I affectionately love in the truth, than to aſſume an air (had I any pretences to it) of commanding you as a father. And were I to give any charge in my own name, it ſhould be only this, which is indeed no other, than what the LORD himſelf has given you, that you regard whatever I have to ſay to you, only ſo far as it agrees with his mind and will in his word; and that you ſubmit to it only upon his authority, which is abſolute and uncontrollable, whilſt I have none, but what conſiſts in aſſerting his. *Call*

no

no man master upon earth; for one is your master, even Christ (*r*).

When you reflect on what has been done, in separating you to the pastoral office in this church of CHRIST, according to the rules of his word, you may think you hear him saying to you, as he did to his disciples after he had washed their feet, *Know you what I have done to you* (*s*)? He has put a high honor upon you; has committed an awful and important trust to you; has laid you under special obligations, attended with gracious promises of assistance; and has brought you into a sphere of eminent service, which you must give an account of another day. And as I must likewise be called to an account for this, as well as all my other ministrations, you, dear brother, will excuse the freedom, which faithfulness obliges me to use in the serious exhortation I am now to give you, and which I would direct as much to myself, as to you: For though, I trust, we in some measure know, desire, and are prepared, by the grace of GOD, to do the things that please him; yet, as we need to have them further impressed upon our consciences, and we may hope, on such a solemn occasion, for his blessing upon the humble attempt, you will spare me a few words, and that without admitting of a jealousy, as though I suspected any ill concerning you, than which I assure you, Sir, nothing can be farther from my thoughts: and it gives me no small pleasure to observe, that in the sentiments, and holy purposes, by divine grace, which you have nobly professed before many witnesses, there is such an intire harmony with the design of this address, in which I would add my testimony to yours, and do all that in me lies to subserve the establishment of every good imagination of the thoughts of your heart; and, in order thereunto, shall suggest nothing but what I believe to be, either expressly or by just consequence, contained in the inspired oracles, the

(*r*) Matt. xxiii. 9, 10. (*s*) John xiii. 12.

the only rule of faith and practice. May GOD enable me to keep within those sacred bounds, and then print what may be offered upon your heart and mine; and upon the hearts of all our attending reverend brethren and fathers, if I may be allowed to be constructively a monitor also to them.

I cannot fix on a properer passage of scripture for the basis of this brotherly exhortation, than that, with which you concluded your excellent confession, *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee* (*t*).

In these words we have an apostolic charge of *Paul* the aged to young *Timothy*, which, by virtue of its divine authority, is of equal obligation from my mouth to you. Let me therefore, taking rise from hence, recommend the duties enjoined; and the arguments to enforce them, as the LORD shall enable me. I would begin with,

First, The duties enjoined; and they are two, with perseverance in them to the end. *Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine; continue in them.* Let experience and practice lead the way to doctrine and counsel, that like *a good man*, and *a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*, you may *bring forth out of the treasure of your heart, good things, both new and old* (*u*). First teach yourself, and then teach others, as one desirous that you and they may be all taught of GOD. See to it, first, that all things be right in your own soul; and then use your utmost endeavours, to give right instruction to others, as ever you would expect the divine presence and blessing, to make your labors pleasant and profitable to yourself and them. Begin at home; and then carry your concern and care abroad, through all your holy ministrations; and that not only when you first set out in the work of the LORD, or by fits and starts afterwards, in a good mood, and in a smooth path; but by an assiduous persevering

(*t*) 1 Tim. iv. 16. (*u*) Matt. xii. 35. and xiii. 52.

perſevering diligence, amidſt all difficulties, oppoſition and diſcouragements, through the whole courſe of your life.

I. Take heed to thyſelf. Attend carefully (ἐπέχε) to the things that concern yourſelf, with reſpect to your own ſtate before GOD; the frame and temper of your heart; your furniture for the miniſtry; and the whole compaſs of your behaviour, relating to GOD, yourſelf, and others.

1. Take heed to yourſelf, with reſpect to your own ſtate before GOD.

This is a fundamental charge, which is firſt of all, and continuedly to be taken care of, as I truſt it already has been. If your own ſoul is loſt, all is loſt to you for ever; and without a conſcientious care about its eternal welfare you cannot be a good *miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt, nouriſhed up in the words of faith and of good doctrine* (*w*): For he will have little concern for the ſouls of others, who is careleſs about his own; he will be little qualified to lead them into the way of ſalvation by JESUS CHRIST, who is a ſtranger to it himſelf; and will have little heart to deal out the myſteries of GOD to others, who has no good hope of a perſonal intereſt in them, to the profiting of his own ſoul: Nor can he warrantably and comfortably expect that GOD ſhould be with him, to own and ſucceed him in his work, while his own heart is not with GOD in it. See to it then, my beloved brother, that you yourſelf be, and, through the witneſſing of the Spirit with your ſpirit, know yourſelf to be in CHRIST; that you are in a ſtate of favor with GOD, through faith in the great redeemer, and ſhall not come into condemnation; that a work of heart-changing grace is wrought in your own ſoul; that you are paſſed from death to life; and that, under the influence of the holy Spirit, you have given up your whole ſelf to the LORD, without reſerve, and are experimentally acquainted with the efficacious powers of vital religion, and

(*w*) 1 Tim. iv 6.

and godlineſs. *Give diligence to make your* own *calling and election ſure*, that this may be a clear and ſettled point between GOD and you, *to the full aſſurance of hope to the end* (*y*).

2. Take heed to yourſelf, with reſpect to the frame and temper of your heart.

See that this be ſuch as becomes the chriſtian, and the miniſter of JESUS CHRIST; that you maintain a holy reverence of the great GOD, and an awful ſenſe of his infinite majeſty, omniſcience and holineſs, and of your being accountable to him, to make you humble, watchful and faithful, whereſoever you are, or whatever you do; and that you keep up lively thoughts of the riches of his grace in CHRIST, to engage your heart to him, to ſweeten all the labors and ſufferings you may be called to, for his name's ſake, and to encourage and ſupport you under them. Be thankful for what you have received, and humbly depending for what you further need: Live by faith on the ſon of GOD, who loved you, and gave himſelf for you; live upon him for wiſdom, righteouſneſs and ſtrength, for all aſſiſtance, acceptance and ſucceſs: Commit yourſelf, your way, your work, and your reward to him, and leave them all in his hand: Look to the bleſſed Spirit, to enable you to carry on a daily courſe of holy communion with GOD in CHRIST, to give your ſoul a ſpiritual and heavenly turn, to regulate and invigorate your principles and your views, to lead you into all truth, to endear CHRIST, his Goſpel, and his cauſe, to your own ſoul, to poſſeſs you with a deep and affecting ſenſe of their excellence and importance, and to inſpire you with chriſtian fortitude, and fervent zeal for the glory of GOD, and with a moſt ardent and compaſſionate love to periſhing ſouls.

Be concerned, my reverend brother, that theſe principles and views may govern you, to the extinction

(*y*) 2 Pet. i. 10. and Heb. vi. 11

tinction of all worldly mindedneſs and puſillanimous fears, of vain-glory and ſelf-applauſe, of intemperate heats and uncharitable cenſures, and all *the wrath of man which works not the righteouſneſs of God*, that your ſpirit may not be ſwayed by any earthly bias, nor enfeebled by cowardice, nor ſoured with prejudices, pride and envy, or with bitterneſs, fury and malice againſt any, no, not againſt thoſe that oppoſe the glorious peculiarities of the Goſpel: But, while you have a holy deteſtation of their dangerous errors, labor to maintain a benevolent frame of ſpirit toward their perſons, and to be yourſelf a ſhining *example of believers, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith and purity*, as the Apoſtle directs (z).

Let your zeal for truth and holineſs, and againſt error and ſin, be proportioned to the importance of things, that though there ought to be no indifference in your mind to any doctrines or practices, which you believe to be of GOD; yet thoſe that are moſt vital, and influential to his glory, and the intereſt of real religion, may command the warmeſt fervor of your ſoul about them. But as to things of leſs conſequence, cultivate all poſſible charity, forbearance and peace, in the temper of your ſpirit toward them that differ from you; and look upon and love all thoſe as brethren, who hold the head, and bear his image. In all this let integrity and uprightneſs preſerve you, that you may ever appear to be what you really are, and may *approve the things that are excellent, and be ſincere and without offence, till the day of Chriſt* (a).

3. Take heed to yourſelf, with reſpect to your furniture for the miniſtry.

The things that have been ſpoken of, are indeed eſſential parts of this furniture; but that which I now further aim at, relates to what are uſually called miniſterial abilities, or ſpiritual gifts; and I heartily rejoice that GOD has honored you with ſo many of theſe: But I beſeech you, dear brother, to recollect,

(z) 1 Tim. iv. 12. (a) Phl. i. 10.

that these are not so far advanced, as to need no further cultivation and improvement: Whatever you have already attained, there is abundant room, and occasion, to be pressing still forwards; and if your present ministerial talents be not improved to an increase for your master's use, they will wither and decline; and there is great danger of their being taken from you: *Be not* therefore *high-minded*; *but fear*.

There needs great wisdom and prudence, as well as an honest heart, to manage the cause of CHRIST to advantage, that it may not suffer through ignorance on one hand, or indiscretions on the other, which either the fear of men, or an affectation of pleasing them, or the foibles of an easy natural temper, or an unyielding stiffness, and rash zeal, might betray you into. Labor therefore to increase your stock of useful knowledge, and of judgment, to husband and apply it, on all occasions, in the best manner, that, like a wise and faithful steward, you may know how to conduct the affairs, distribute the provisions, and maintain the charter, obligations and privileges of the household of faith. In order hereunto *give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: Meditate on these things; give yourself wholly to them, that your profiting may appear to all* (*b*).

Let the Bible be your chief study, with an eye to the father of lights, to the great prophet of the church, and to the Spirit of truth, that you may be thoroughly enlightned and established in the divine authority of the scriptures: Study the evidences of this blessed revelation, that you may be more and more master of the arguments for, and objections against it; and may be capable of supporting it against the numerous cavils, which the infidels of this, and former ages, have artfully and laboriously raised in opposition to it: And dig deep into the mines of evangelical truth, the riches of which are inexhaustible, that

(*b*) 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

that you may know, prize and keep them, as the choiceſt treaſure, and may be enabled to draw them out in great abundance, and to defend them againſt the various attacks and encroachments of thoſe, that would corrupt the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and rob us of its peculiar and diſtinguiſhing glories.

Daily read the ſcriptures in the original languages; and labor after a familiar acquaintance with the very words and phraſes, by which the holy Ghoſt teaches ſpiritual things, and impreſſes them upon the conſcience, as the beſt oratory of the pulpit; and after a modeſt preſence of mind, and decent readineſs of expreſſion, that you may be *apt to teach*. Let your critical learning, and the chief of all your other reading and ſtudies, ſubſerve theſe views, and tend toward them; as your cardinal point, that you may be *thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works:* And *continue in theſe things* all your days (*c*).

4. Take heed to yourſelf, with reſpect to the whole compaſs of your behaviour, relating to GOD, yourſelf, and others.

As to what relates to GOD, beſides the things that have been ſuggeſted about the frame and temper of your heart towards him, let religion be the buſineſs and the holy law of GOD the rule of your life. Make conſcience of fulfilling every duty he enjoins, and of departing from every thing he forbids; and be much in earneſt and importunate prayer to GOD through JESUS CHRIST, as mediator, by the aſſiſtance of his Spirit. Let this be your choſen and daily work in your retirements, and in the family, at the head of which providence has placed you; and as opportunities offer, and occaſions require, in the church of CHRIST, and among your chriſtian friends. *In every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known to God* (*d*). Wreſtle with him in your prayers, for yourſelf and others; for the anointings of his Spirit, and for his bleſſing upon

(*c*) 2 Tim. iii. 14, 17. (*d*) Phil. iv. 6.

your own, and all your brethrens miniſtrations; and ſtand up for purity of doctrine, worſhip and diſcipline, and for the glory of all the divine perfections, counſels and government, againſt corruptions and profaneneſs of every kind.

Labor likewiſe, under divine influence, after a becoming ſelf-government, in a due regulation of all your paſſions and appetites; and particularly in temperance, chaſtity, and ſobriety of mind and manners, that *you may know how to poſſeſs your veſſel in ſanctification and honor. Flee alſo youthful luſts; and follow righteouſneſs, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord with a pure heart* (*e*).

In all your behaviour towards others, ſeek wiſdom and grace from heaven to enable you to recommend the good ways of the LORD, by all holy converſation and godlineſs, in every relation of life, civil and religious, in which you now do, or hereafter may ſtand: Take all poſſible care to live the doctrines you preach, that you may be among thoſe that are *the ſalt of the earth*, and *the light of the world*; and that whatever company you keep, or come into, they may be, one way or other, the better for you: *Provide things honeſt*, (Καλα) honorable and praiſe-worthy, *in the ſight of all men*; and *if it be poſſible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men* (*f*). Labor after this by all lawful methods, not to the ſacrificing of holineſs and truth; and eſpecially important truth; but to the maintaining of both, in the moſt amicable manner, that *ſpeaking the truth in love, you may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Chriſt* (*g*); and that you may *follow peace with all men, and holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord* (*h*).

In your converſes with the enemies of CHRIST, and of his truths and ways, endeavour to convince them by ſcripture and ſound reaſon, and to win upon them with all the gentleneſs and kindneſs, that may conſiſt

(*e*) 1 Theſſ. iv. 4. and 2 Tim. ii. 22. (*f*) Rom. xii, 17. 18.
(*g*) Eph. iv. 15. (*h*) Heb. xii. 14.

ſiſt with your being *valiant for the truth, and contending earneſtly for the faith which was once delivered to the ſaints* (*i*). *Strive for the faith of the Goſpel*, and ſtrive zealouſly for it, in this degenerate and ſceptical age: But ſee that it be only by Goſpel-methods, that while you are pleading for it, the manner of your plea may not diſgrace it. Take heed of mean compliances with its oppoſers, on one hand; and of carrying your own unhallowed fire to GOD's altar, on the other; but *in meekneſs inſtruct thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (*k*), &c.

In converſing with your brethren and fellow-chriſtians, do what in you lies to ſtrengthen their hands in every good way and work, and to promote a harmonious ſpirit of cordial friendſhip among them, that *whereunto* they and you *have already attained, ye may walk by the ſame rule, and mind the ſame things; and if in any thing they be otherwiſe minded*, and you cannot ſatisfy them in a brotherly way, leave them to GOD *to reveal it to them* (*l*), in confidence, that if they do indeed belong to him, and it be a matter of much conſequence, he will, in his time and way, convince them of it, as the Apoſtle intimates.

And in your behaviour toward the church, *over which the holy Ghoſt has made you overſeer*, be careful to know the ſtate of the flock, in all the variety of their ſpiritual concerns, and to maintain their right of ſuffrage, together with your own right of preſidence, with a ſpirit of meekneſs and love. Never *lord it over God's heritage*; but be contented with the exerciſe of ſuch powers to their edification, as belong to *a miniſter of Chriſt*, and a *ſteward of the myſteries of God*, that *has no diminion over their faith*; *but* is to be *a helper of their joy* (*m*). In all your management of church-affairs, and carriage towards its members, you are to behave with prudence and temper, with cau-

(*i*) Jude 3.
(*k*) 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26.
(*l*) Phil. iii. 15, 16.
(*m*) 2 Cor. i. 24.

tion and modeſty, with fidelity and tenderneſs, with courage and condeſcention, ſuitable to every occurrence, that no diſorders may be countenanced, and no tender conſciences grieved; and that nothing may break in upon its purity, edification, love and peace. In diſpenſing the viſible ſeals of the covenant, you ſhould proceed according to the rule and warrant, with relation to believers and their ſeed, which CHRIST has given you in his word. And in viſiting church-members, and others of your congregation, eſpecially when they labor under ſickneſs, or any other affliction, in ſoul or body, it behoves you to do all that may be, to promote their ſpiritual welfare; and it is your incumbent duty to take ſpecial care of the children of the covenant, and of the riſing generation, that they be trained up in the way of the LORD, in the days of their youth.

With reſpect to all theſe, and ſuch like things, take heed, brother, to yourſelf, to your own ſpirit, words, and ways, *giving no offence in any thing, that the miniſtry be not blamed: but in all things approve yourſelf, as a miniſter of God, in much patience; in afflictions, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes; by pureneſs, by knowledge, by long-ſuffering, by kindneſs, by the holy Ghoſt, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power by God, by the armour of righteouſneſs on the right hand and on the left, by honor and diſhonor, by evil report and good report*, and though accounted by ſome *as a deceiver, yet true* (*n*). Continue, brother, a ſteady courſe, by heavenly aid, in all theſe things, relating to yourſelf, that *no man may deſpiſe your youth* (*o*). And then,

II. *Take heed to your doctrine.*

Never dare to preach any thing to others, farther than you believe yourſelf, upon the beſt examination, that GOD enables you to make; and take care to explain, confirm, defend and improve, what you offer, as occaſions require, like *a good ſteward of the manifold grace*

(*n*) 2 Cor. vi. 3,—8. (*o*) 1 Tim. iv. 12.

grace of God; ſpeaking as becomes the oracles of God, and miniſtring as of the ability which God gives, that he in all things may be glorified through Jeſus Chriſt (*p*). In order hereunto, ſee that the doctrine you preach be clear and ſcriptural; important and ſeaſonable; evangelical and practical.

1. Take heed that your doctrine be clear and ſcriptural.

Beg of GOD to make you a complete maſter of your ſubject, that you may underſtand what you ſay, and whereof you affirm; and endeavour to ſet your ideas in an eaſy and familiar, plain and obvious light, before the minds of your hearers. Do not ſeek to hide your own ſentiments under ambiguous terms; but wherever you preach, be uniformly frank and open in declaring them, eſpecially in caſes of importance, that every one may know your real meaning; and endeavour to bring them down to the loweſt capacities, in the aſſembly, as far as the nature of things will bear. Never entertain your auditory with cunningly deviſed fables, or philoſophical harangues, or dry ſyſtems of meer morality, or doubtful diſputations; but *feed them with knowledge, and underſtanding*, like *a paſtor according to God's own heart* (*q*).

Above all things elſe, be ſure that your preaching be ſcriptural, *ſpeaking the things which become ſound doctrine, and holding faſt the faithful word, as you have been taught, that you may be able by ſound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince gainſayers* (*r*).

Teach no other doctrine than that which you have received from CHRIST and his Apoſtles, and other inſpired writers; but keep cloſe to the rule of faith in the word of GOD, (as I rejoice to find is your determined deſign) and to our LORD's commiſſion, who has ſaid, *Teach to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world* (*s*). Compare ſpiritual

(*p*) 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.
(*q*) Jer. iii. 15.
(*r*) Tit. ii. 1. and i. 9.
(*s*) Matt. xxviii. 20.

things with ſpiritual, and thoroughly weigh every context, that you may give the true and genuine ſenſe of ſcripture: and take heed of *walking in craftineſs, or handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifeſtation of the truth, commend yourſelf to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God* (*t*). May it be the holy ambition of your ſoul, ſo to preach, as that GOD ſhall *always cauſe you to triumph in Chriſt, and make manifeſt the ſavor of his knowledge by you in every place*, where you ſtatedly, or occaſionally miniſter! And take heed of being as *many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of ſincerity, but as of God, in the ſight of God, ſpeak thou*, brother, *in Chriſt* (*u*). *Let uncorruptneſs, gravity, and ſincerity, and ſound ſpeech, which cannot be condemned*, run through your doctrine, as well as *a pattern of good works* run through your life, *that he who is of the contrary part, may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of you* (*w*).

Guard againſt all extremes, that either intrench upon the doctrines of grace, or upon any of the divine perfections; or that lead to ſelf-ſufficiency, or to licentiouſneſs. Study how you may, in the beſt manner, ſolve difficulties, and reconcile ſeeming contradictions in the word of GOD, without ſtarting ſuch as are needleſs, and unprofitable to be diſcuſſed, and without managing them with an air of controverſy; and never aim at being *wiſe above what is written*. Do not make myſteries, where the ſcripture has made none; nor pretend to explain what the ſcripture has left as myſteries, which would ſoon plunge you out of your depth; but publiſh them to be believed, upon divine authority, juſt as GOD has left them, though you cannot account for their modes, nor tell *how thoſe things can be*. Hence,

2. Take heed that your doctrine be important and ſeaſonable.

There

(*t*) 2 Cor. iv. 2. (*u*) 2 Cor. ii. 14, 17.
(*w*) Tit. ii. 7, 8.

There is indeed no part of divine revelation, that is not one way or other useful: For *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (*x*). But some of its sacred truths are more profitable than others; and some are of such a critical nature, as not to make it needful for common hearers to be puzzled with them; because they cannot be easily brought within the compass of their thoughts; nor do they affect their personal religion, edification and salvation: But nothing should be *kept back, that may be profitable to them*; nor should you *shun to declare* any part of *the counsel of God* (*y*), as the great Apostle did not; every needful doctrine and duty, personal and relative, should take their turns in your ministry, whether the people will hear, or forbear: And yet even among profitable truths, some are of more use and importance than others, as the glory of GOD, and the conversion, edification, serviceableness to the church and the world, and the eternal happiness of the auditory, are more nearly concerned in them; and, for that reason they ought to be more insisted on, *that every one may have his portion*, especially of such sort *of meat, in due season* (*z*).

Let therefore solid and substantial truths and duties be your chief themes of discourse, and that as they may be best suited to the different states and conditions of saints and sinners. *Study to shew yourself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (*a*). Exercise all your talents, to separate between the precious and the vile; and to let them know what GOD's word says to them respectively, that ignorant souls may be instructed; that hardened obstinate sinners may be awakened and convinced; and that convinced and relenting sinners may

(*x*) 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.
(*y*) Acts xx. 20, 27.
(*z*) Luke xii. 42.
(*a*) 2 Tim. ii. 15.

may be directed and encouraged; that ſcrupulous, tender and troubled conſciences may be relieved; that the erroneous may be reduced to the knowledge and love of the truth, as it is in JESUS, and looſe profeſſors may be warned, and ſtirred up to their duty; that weak believers may be ſtrengthned; that doubting believers may be ſatisfied; that diſconſolate believers may be comforted, that backſliding believers may be reclaimed, and ſtrong believers may be yet more and more confirmed in faith, comfort and holineſs, to compleat ſalvation; that CHRIST's lambs and ſheep may be fed; that babes in CHRIST may have their milk, and men of full age, who by reaſon of uſe, have their ſpiritual ſenſes *exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil*, may have their ſtrong meat; and that ſuch doctrines and duties, promiſes and threatnings may be moſt inculcated, as the circumſtances of your people, and the corruptions in principle and practice, and the oppoſition of the preſent day, may render moſt neceſſary. Hence,

3. Take heed that your doctrine be evangelical and practical.

This ſort of doctrine is indeed of great importance; and therefore cannot ordinarily be unſeaſonable; and it is your main buſineſs, as a miniſter of CHRIST, to preach him, and his Goſpel, which is *the Goſpel of the grace of God*, *the Goſpel of ſalvation*, and *the doctrine according to godlineſs*. Preach Goſpel-truths, and Goſpel-duties: Let the glorious and diſtinguiſhing peculiarities of the Goſpel-revelation, influence, inforce and govern all your diſcourſes on moral duties, and ſhed a beauty upon them; and whatever your ſubject be, let it, one way or other, turn toward CHRIST, and center in him, who is the ſpring and life, the Alpha and Omega, of the chriſtian's hope, holineſs and happineſs. See that the doctrines you preach be calculated to diſplay *the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, and lead the ſoul to him, that he may be exalted and the creature abaſed before him; and

that

that they be close and searching, suited to inform the judgment, and strike the conscience, to convince and persuade, to humble and encourage, to reach experience, and move upon the affections, and all the springs of human action, that light and savor may be diffused through all your ministrations; and that, by the attending Spirit of the new testament, they may make their way to the hearts, and influence the lives of your hearers.

You will easily perceive, dear brother, that these doctrines include, among others which you have made a good confession of, the differences there are between the covenants of works and grace, and their respective heads, and the various dispensations of the covenant of grace: The fall of all mankind under their first public head, with the guiltiness and depravity, impotence and misery, of their fallen state; and the eternal counsel of GOD's wisdom and will, about the recovery of a remnant of them, under CHRIST, the second *Adam*, *according to the election of grace*, through the redemption that is in him, and by the effectual application of the holy Spirit, in the way, and by the means of GOD's appointment, *that no flesh might glory in his presence, but that he who glorieth may glory in the Lord.* The divine and œconomical glories of the three adorable persons in the unity of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are likewise to be supported and displayed in your ministry. And in connexion with these doctrines, you are to go on to propose CHRIST to the acceptance of all sorts of sinners, with an eye to his almighty power and sovereign grace, to open their hearts to receive him: You are also to preach the nature and necessity of regeneration, and of faith in the LORD JESUS, in his person, as God-man, and in all his offices of a Prophet, Priest and King, as Mediator; and the doctrine of repentance toward GOD, and new obedience in heart and life;

of

of juſtification by the righteouſneſs of CHRIST imputed to them that believe; of ſanctification by his Spirit; of perſeverance in grace and holineſs, together with all chriſtian privileges and duties, that ſhall iſſue in the final *ſalvation, which is in Chriſt Jeſus with eternal glory.*

And that there may be no room for any of your unconverted hearers, to deſpair on one hand, or to be ſlothful and preſumptuous on the other, let them know that a door of hope is opened in CHRIST before them; that there is all ſalvation in him for the chief of ſinners; and that none, under the Goſpel, are, by its tenor, excluded, who do not exclude themſelves by their own impenitence and unbelief; but that if they, through the hardneſs of their own hearts, continue to reject him, and perſiſt in their iniquities, they will certainly and deſervedly *die in their ſins, and the wrath of God will for ever abide upon them.*

Thus, dear brother, *Take heed to yourſelf and to your doctrine*, through all the days of your miniſtration in the kingdom and patience of JESUS. Let me now add a few words upon,

Secondly, The arguments to enforce theſe your duties: *For in doing this, thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear thee.* What weighty and animating conſiderations are theſe! May the LORD himſelf ſet them home upon your heart and mine!

I need not tell you, Sir, that GOD alone is the author of ſalvation; and that you can be only inſtrumental in his hand, and ſubſervient to his efficacious grace, in the ſalvation of your own, and of others ſouls: Nor need I inform you, that how wiſely, faithfully, plainly, or pathetically and laboriouſly ſoever you are helped to diſcharge the important truſt committed to you, it is not FOR, but

but IN *doing this*, as our verſion well expreſſes it, that you, or they ſhall be ſaved. Doing this (τᾶτο ποιῶν) is only the way and means of GOD's appointment, and of your expectation of this bleſſed event: And whenever it ſhall be brought to paſs, it will not be as a reward of merit; but of free, though promiſed grace, which is indeed the only, and the ſureſt reward, that ſinful unworthy creatures can have any hope of: For *therefore it is of grace, that the promiſe might be ſure unto all the ſeed* (*b*). And what greater encouragement can there be to faithfulneſs and diligence in your LORD's work, than the promiſe which now lies before you? Conſider then that,

1. In attending to theſe chriſtian and miniſterial duties, you, by the grace of GOD, will ſubſerve your own ſalvation.

This is a matter of the higheſt conſequence to yourſelf, who have a ſoul to be ſaved, or loſt for ever, as well as any of your hearers. And ah! how cutting and agonizing would it be, at the great day, to ſee others admitted into the kingdom of heaven, by means of your miniſtrations, and yourſelf ſhut out! But *I hope better things of you*, brother, *things that accompany ſalvation, though I thus ſpeak.* And yet what care and pains, what fidelity and diligence, what watchfulneſs and prayer, and what humility and ſelf-denial, ought you to be excited to, *leſt by any means, when you have preached to others, you yourſelf ſhould be a caſt-away* (*c*).

Remember that your being a miniſter, will not ſave you. No, your difficulties, temptations and dangers, as a miniſter, the truſt committed to you, and the account you muſt give to GOD, are greater than thoſe of others; and therefore more grace is needful for you, than for them, to carry you through all, and bring you off well at laſt. But remember alſo,

(*b*) Rom. iv. 16. (*c*) 1 Cor. ix. 27.

alſo, for your encouragement, that you ſerve the beſt of maſters, *whoſe grace is ſufficient for you, whoſe ſtrength is made perfect in your weakneſs*, and who has promiſed to be with you: And if you obtain mercy to be faithful, he will certainly ſtand by you, will aſſiſt and own you, and preſerve you from every dangerous ſnare; and *when the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, you ſhall receive the crown of glory, which fades not away* (*d*). Then he, as judge of all, will ſay to you, *Well done, good and faithful ſervant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (*e*). The hopes of this ſhould invigorate you in the way; and the enjoyment of this, will make you a rich and eternal amends at the end, for all the troubles, labors and ſufferings, you may meet with in the work of the LORD. Take heed therefore to yourſelf and to your doctrine, for your own ſalvation's ſake. And conſider that,

2. In the ſame way of inſtrumentality, you, by the bleſſing of GOD upon a faithful diſcharge of theſe duties, will be the means of ſaving them that hear you.

Their ſouls are committed by the LORD JESUS to your miniſterial charge, that you may watch over them, and watch for them, as one that muſt give an account to him: And O how dreadful would it be, if any of their blood ſhould be required at your hand, for your unfaithfulneſs or neglects! But if you are found true to your truſt, you will deliver your own ſoul, whatever becomes of theirs; you will be pure from the blood of all men, and, will *be a ſweet ſavor of Chriſt to God, in them that periſh*, as well as *in them that are ſaved* (*f*). Yea, and you may warrantably and comfortably hope for his bleſſing on your labors, to the plucking of many as brands out of the fire, and *turning them from*

(*d*) 1 Pet. v. 4. (*e*) Matt. xxv. 23.
(*f*) 2 Cor. ii. 15.

from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and inheritance among them, which are ſanctified by faith in CHRIST JESUS (*g*).

And O what a noble pleaſure it is, to be an inſtrument of glorifying GOD, in the ſalvation of immortal ſouls! If it were but of one ſoul, that would be well worth ſtudying, preaching, praying and laboring for, all your days. How much more, if, the *hand of the Lord being with you, a great number ſhould believe and turn to the Lord* (*h*)! What new life and ſpirit will every ſeal of your miniſtry give you, while you are toiling under its difficulties and diſcouragements! A reflection upon this will be like an angel of GOD ſtrengthning you. And to what rich account will it turn at laſt, when you ſhall ſee them, together with yourſelf, at the right hand of CHRIST! Theſe will be *your glory and joy, and crown of rejoicing, in the preſence of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, at his coming* (*i*). For *they that be wiſe, ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteouſneſs, as the ſtars for ever and ever* (*k*). Take heed therefore to yourſelf, and to your doctrine; and continue in them, for your people's ſake, that they may be ſaved in the day of the LORD JESUS.

For a concluſion of the whole, permit me, dear brother, to remind you of our Apoſtle's ſolemn words to *Timothy*; and to leave them as a ſacred bond, under divine authority, upon your ſoul: *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word; be inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and doctrine. Watch thou in all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an* evangelical paſtor; *make full*

(*g*) Acts xxvi 18. (*h*) Acts xi. 21.
(*i*) 1 Theſſ. i. 19, 20. (*k*) Dan. xii. 3.

full proof of thy miniſtry (*l*). To which I would add another of his apoſtolic injunctions, which equally concerns you: *Thou, O man of God, flee* the inſnaring enticements of this world; *and follow after righteouſneſs, godlineſs, faith, love, patience, meekneſs. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art alſo called, and haſt profeſſed a good profeſſion before many witneſſes. I give thee charge in the ſight of God, who quickneth all things, and before Chriſt Jeſus, who before* Pontius Pilate *witneſſed a good confeſſion, that thou keep this commandment without ſpot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; which in his times he ſhall ſhew, who is the bleſſed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee: To whom be honor and power everlaſting* (*m*). *Amen.*

(*l*) 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 5. (*m*) 1 Tim. vi. 11,—16.

FINIS.